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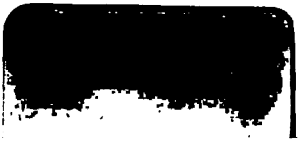

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ANNALS OF A QUIET NEIGHBOURHOOD.

VOL. II.

ANNALS OF A QUIET NEIGHBOURHOOD.

By GEORGE MAC DONALD, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "DAVID ELGINBROD," "ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ANNALS OF
A QUIET NEIGHBOURHOOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE AVENUE.

IT will not appear strange that I should linger so long upon the first few months of my association with a people who, now that I am an old man, look to me like my own children. For those who were then older than myself are now "old dwellers in those high countries" where there is no age, only wisdom; and I shall soon go to them. How glad I shall be to see my Old Rogers again, who, as he taught me upon earth, will teach me yet more, I thank my

God, in heaven! But I must not let the reverie which always gathers about the feather-end of my pen the moment I take it up to write these recollections, interfere with the work before me.

After this Christmas-tide, I found myself in closer relationship to my parishioners. No doubt I was always in danger of giving unknown offence to those who were ready to fancy that I neglected them, and did not distribute my *favours* equally. But as I never took offence, the offence I gave was easily got rid of. A clergyman, of all men, should be slow to take offence, for if he does, he will never be free or strong to reprove sin. And it must sometimes be his duty to speak severely to those, especially the good, who are turning their faces the wrong way. It is of little use to reprove the sinner, but it is worth while sometimes to reprove those who have a regard for righteousness, however imperfect

they may be. "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee."

But I took great care about *interfering;* though I would interfere upon request—not always, however, upon the side whence the request came, and more seldom still upon either side. The clergyman must never be a partisan. When our Lord was requested to act as umpire between two brothers, He refused. But He spoke and said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." Now, though the best of men is unworthy to loose the latchet of His shoe, yet the servant must be as his Master. Ah me! while I write it, I remember that the sinful woman might yet do as she would with His sacred feet. I bethink me: Desert may not touch His shoe-tie: Love may kiss His feet.

I visited, of course, at the Hall, as at the farmhouses in the country, and the cottages in

the village. I did not come to like Mrs Oldcastle better. And there was one woman in the house whom I disliked still more: that Sarah whom Judy had called in my hearing a white wolf. Her face was yet whiter than that of her mistress, only it was not smooth like hers; for its whiteness came apparently from the small-pox, which had so thickened the skin that no blood, if she had any, could shine through. I seldom saw her—only indeed caught a glimpse of her now and then as I passed through the house.

Nor did I make much progress with Mr Stoddart. He had always something friendly to say, and often some theosophical theory to bring forward, which, I must add, never seemed to me to mean, or at least to reveal, anything. He was a great reader of mystical books, and yet the man's nature seemed cold. It was sunshiny, but not sunny. His intellect was rather a lambent flame than a genial

warmth. He could make things, but he could not grow anything. And when I came to see that he had had more than any one else to do with the education of Miss Oldcastle, I understood her a little better, and saw that her so-called e-ducation had been in a great measure re-pression—of a negative sort, no doubt, but not therefore the less mischievous. For to teach speculation instead of devotion, mysticism instead of love, word instead of deed, is surely ruinously repressive to the nature that is meant for sunbright activity both of heart and hand. My chief perplexity continued to be how he could play the organ as he did.

My reader will think that I am always coming round to Miss Oldcastle; but if he does, I cannot help it. I began, I say, to understand her a little better. She seemed to me always like one walking in a "watery sunbeam," without knowing that it was but the wintry pledge of a summer sun at hand. She took it, or was

trying to take it, for *the* sunlight; trying to make herself feel all the glory people said was in the light, instead of making haste towards the perfect day. I found afterwards that several things had combined to bring about this condition; and I know she will forgive me, should I, for the sake of others, endeavour to make it understood by and by.

I have not much more to tell my readers about this winter. As out of a whole changeful season only one day, or, it may be, but one moment in which the time seemed to burst into its own blossom, will cling to the memory; so of the various interviews with my friends, and the whole flow of the current of my life, during that winter, nothing more of nature or human nature occurs to me worth recording. I will pass on to the summer season as rapidly as I may, though the early spring will detain me with the relation of just a single incident.

I was on my way to the Hall to see Mr

Stoddart. I wanted to ask him whether something could not be done beyond his exquisite playing to rouse the sense of music in my people. I believed that nothing helps you so much to feel as the taking of what share may, from the nature of the thing, be possible to you; because, for one reason, in order to feel it is necessary that the mind should rest upon the matter, whatever it is. The poorest success, provided the attempt has been genuine, will enable one to enter into any art ten times better than before. Now I had, I confess, little hope of moving Mr Stoddart in the matter; but if I should succeed, I thought it would do himself more good to mingle with his humble fellows in the attempt to do them a trifle of good, than the opening of any number of intellectual windows towards the circumambient truth.

It was just beginning to grow dusk. The wind was blustering in gusts among the trees,

swaying them suddenly and fiercely like a keen passion, now sweeping them all one way as if the multitude of tops would break loose and rush away like a wild river, and now subsiding as suddenly, and allowing them to recover themselves and stand upright, with tones and motions of indignant expostulation. There was just one cold bar of light in the west, and the east was one gray mass, while overhead the stars were twinkling. The grass and all the ground about the trees were very wet. The time seemed more dreary somehow than the winter. Rigour was past, and tenderness had not come. For the wind was cold without being keen, and bursting from the trees every now and then with a roar as of a sea breaking on distant sands, whirled about me as if it wanted me to go and join in its fierce play.

Suddenly I saw, to my amazement, in a walk that ran alongside of the avenue, Miss Oldcastle struggling against the wind, which blew

straight down the path upon her. The cause of my amazement was twofold. First, I had supposed her with her mother in London, whither their journeys had been not infrequent since Christmas-tide; and next—why should she be fighting with the wind, so far from the house, with only a shawl drawn over her head?

The reader may wonder how I should know her in this attire in the dusk, and where there was not the smallest probability of finding her. Suffice it to say that I did recognise her at once; and passing between two great tree-trunks, and through an opening in some underwood, was by her side in a moment. But the noise of the wind had prevented her from hearing my approach, and when I uttered her name, she started violently, and, turning, drew herself up very haughtily, in part, I presume, to hide her tremor. — She was always a little haughty with me, I must acknowledge. Could there have been anything in my address, how-

ever unconscious of it I was, that made her fear I was ready to become intrusive? Or might it not be that, hearing of my footing with my parishioners generally, she was prepared to resent any assumption of clerical familiarity with her; and so, in my behaviour, any poor innocent "bush was supposed a bear." For I need not tell my reader that nothing was farther from my intention, even with the lowliest of my flock, than to presume upon my position as clergyman. I think they all *gave* me the relation I occupied towards them personally.—But I had never seen her look so haughty as now. If I had been watching her very thoughts she could hardly have looked more indignant.

"I beg your pardon," I said, distressed; "I have startled you dreadfully."

"Not in the least," she replied, but without moving, and still with a curve in her form like the neck of a frayed horse.

I thought it better to leave apology, which was evidently disagreeable to her, and speak of indifferent things.

"I was on my way to call on Mr Stoddart," I said.

"You will find him at home, I believe."

"I fancied you and Mrs Oldcastle in London."

"We returned yesterday."

Still she stood as before. I made a movement in the direction of the house. She seemed as if she would walk in the opposite direction.

"May I not walk with you to the house?"

"I am not going in just yet."

"Are you protected enough for such a night?"

"I enjoy the wind."

I bowed and walked on; for what else could I do?

I cannot say that I enjoyed leaving her be-

hind me in the gathering dark, the wind blowing her about with no more reverence than if she had been a bush of privet. Nor was it with a light heart that I bore her repulse as I slowly climbed the hill to the house. However, a little personal mortification is wholesome—though I cannot say either that I derived much consolation from the reflection.

Sarah opened the glass door, her black, glossy, restless eyes looking out of her white face from under gray eyebrows. I knew at once by her look beyond me that she had expected to find me accompanied by her young mistress. I did not volunteer any information, as my reader may suppose.

I found, as I had feared, that, although Mr Stoddart seemed to listen with some interest to what I said, I could not bring him to the point of making any practical suggestion, or of responding to one made by me; and I left him with the conviction that he would do nothing

to help me. Yet during the whole of our interview he had not opposed a single word I said. He was like clay too much softened with water to keep the form into which it has been modelled. He would take *some* kind of form easily, and lose it yet more easily. I did not show all my dissatisfaction, however, for that would only have estranged us; and it is not required, nay, it may be wrong, to show all you feel or think: what is required of us is, not to show what we do not feel or think; for that is to be false.

I left the house in a gloomy mood. I know I ought to have looked up to God and said: "These things do not reach to Thee, my Father. Thou art ever the same; and I rise above my small as well as my great troubles by remembering Thy peace, and Thy unchangeable Godhood to me and all Thy creatures." But I did not come to myself all at once. The thought of God had not come,

though it was pretty sure to come before I got home. I was brooding over the littleness of all I could do; and feeling that sickness which sometimes will overtake a man in the midst of the work he likes best, when the unpleasant parts of it crowd upon him, and his own efforts, especially those made from the will without sustaining impulse, come back upon him with a feeling of unreality, decay, and bitterness, as if he had been unnatural and untrue, and putting himself in false relations by false efforts for good. I know this all came from selfishness—thinking about myself instead of about God and my neighbour. But so it was. —And so I was walking down the avenue, where it was now very dark, with my head bent to the ground, when I in my turn started at the sound of a woman's voice, and looking up, saw by the starlight the dim form of Miss Oldcastle standing before me.

She spoke first.

"Mr Walton, I was very rude to you. I beg your pardon."

"Indeed, I did not think so. I only thought what a blundering awkward fellow I was to startle you as I did. You have to forgive me."

"I fancy"—and here I know she smiled, though how I know I do not know—"I fancy I have made that even," she said, pleasantly; "for you must confess I startled you now."

"You did; but it was in a very different way. I annoyed you with my rudeness. You only scattered a swarm of bats that kept flapping their skinny wings in my face."

"What do you mean? There are no bats at this time of the year."

"Not outside. In 'winter and rough weather,' they creep inside, you know."

"Ah! I ought to understand you. But I did not think you were ever like that. I thought you were too good."

"I wish I were. I hope to be some day. I am not yet, anyhow. And I thank you for driving the bats away in the meantime."

"You make me the more ashamed of myself to think that perhaps my rudeness had a share in bringing them.—Yours is no doubt thankless labour sometimes."

She seemed to make the last remark just to prevent the conversation from returning to her as its subject. And now all the bright portions of my work came up before me.

"You are quite mistaken in that, Miss Oldcastle. On the contrary, the thanks I get are far more than commensurate with the labour. Of course one meets with a disappointment sometimes, but that is only when they don't know what you mean. And how should they know what you mean till they are different themselves?—You remember what Wordsworth says on this very subject in his poem of *Simon Lee?*"—

"I do not know anything of Wordsworth."

"'I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning;
Alas! the gratitude of men
Hath oftener left me mourning.'"

"I do not quite see what he means."

"May I recommend you to think about it? You will be sure to find it out for yourself, and that will be ten times more satisfactory than if I were to explain it to you. And, besides, you will never forget it, if you do."

"Will you repeat the lines again?"

I did so.

All this time the wind had been still. Now it rose with a slow gush in the trees. Was it fancy? Or, as the wind moved the shrubbery, did I see a white face? And could it be the White Wolf, as Judy called her?

I spoke aloud:

"But it is cruel to keep you standing here in such a night. You must be a real lover of nature to walk in the dark wind."

"I like it. Good night."

So we parted. I gazed into the darkness after her, though she disappeared at the distance of a yard or two; and would have stood longer had I not still suspected the proximity of Judy's Wolf, which made me turn and go home, regardless now of Mr Stoddart's *doughiness.*

I met Miss Oldcastle several times before the summer, but her old manner remained, or rather had returned, for there had been nothing of it in the tone of her voice in that interview, if *interview* it could be called where neither could see more than the other's outline.

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG WEIR.

BY slow degrees the summer bloomed. Green came instead of white; rainbows instead of icicles. The grounds about the Hall seemed the incarnation of a summer which had taken years to ripen to its perfection. The very grass seemed to have aged into perfect youth in that "haunt of ancient peace;" for surely nowhere else was such thick, delicate-bladed, delicate-coloured grass to be seen. Gnarled old trees of may stood like altars of smoking perfume, or each like one million-petalled flower of upheaved

whiteness—or of tender rosiness, as if the snow which had covered it in winter had sunk in and gathered warmth from the life of the tree, and now crept out again to adorn the summer. The long loops of the laburnum hung heavy with gold towards the sod below; and the air was full of the fragrance of the young leaves of the limes. Down in the valley below, the daisies shone in all the meadows, varied with the buttercup and the celandine; while in damp places grew large pimpernels, and along the sides of the river the meadow-sweet stood amongst the reeds at the very edge of the water, breathing out the odours of dreamful sleep. The clumsy pollards were each one mass of undivided green. The mill-wheel had regained its knotty look, with its moss and its dip and drip, as it yielded to the slow water, which would have let it alone but that there was no other way out of the land to the sea.

I used now to wander about in the fields

and woods, with a book in my hand, at which I often did not look the whole day, and which yet I liked to have with me. And I seemed somehow to come back with most upon those days in which I did not read. In this manner I prepared almost all my sermons that summer. But, although I prepared them thus in the open country, I had another custom, which perhaps may appear strange to some, before I preached them. This was, to spend the Saturday evening, not in my study, but in the church. This custom of mine was known to the sexton and his wife, and the church was always clean and ready for me after about midday, so that I could be alone there as soon as I pleased. It would take more space than my limits will afford to explain thoroughly why I liked to do this. But I will venture to attempt a partial explanation in a few words.

This fine old church in which I was honoured to lead the prayers of my people, was not

the expression of the religious feeling of my time. There was a gloom about it—a sacred gloom, I know, and I loved it; but such gloom as was not in my feeling when I talked to my flock. I honoured the place; I rejoiced in its history; I delighted to think that even by the temples made with hands outlasting these bodies of ours, we were in a sense united to those who in them had before us lifted up holy hands without wrath or doubting; and with many more who, like us, had lifted up at least prayerful hands, without hatred or despair. The place soothed me, tuned me to a solemn mood—one of self-denial, and gentle gladness in all sober things. But, had I been an architect, and had I had to build a church—I do not in the least know how I should have built it—I am certain it would have been very different from this. Else I should be a mere imitator, like all the church-architects I know anything about in the present day. For I

always found the open air the most genial influence upon me for the production of religious feeling and thought. I had been led to try whether it might not be so with me by the fact that our Lord seemed so much to delight in the open air, and late in the day as well as early in the morning would climb the mountain to be alone with His Father. I found that it helped to give a reality to everything that I thought about, if I only contemplated it under the high untroubled blue, with the lowly green beneath my feet, and the wind blowing on me to remind me of the Spirit that once moved on the face of the waters, bringing order out of disorder and light out of darkness, and was now seeking every day a fuller entrance into my heart, that there He might work the one will of the Father in heaven.

My reader will see then, that there was, as it were, not so much a discord, as a lack of harmony between the surroundings wherein my

thoughts took form, or, to use a homelier phrase, my sermon was studied, and the surroundings wherein I had to put these forms into the garments of words, or preach that sermon. I therefore sought to bridge over this difference (if I understood music, I am sure I could find an expression exactly fitted to my meaning),—to find an easy passage between the open-air mood and the church mood, so as to be able to bring into the church as much of the fresh air, and the tree-music, and the colour-harmony, and the gladness over all, as might be possible; and, in order to this, I thought all my sermon over again in the afternoon sun as it shone slantingly through the stained window over Lord Eagleye's tomb, and in the failing light thereafter and the gathering dusk of the twilight, pacing up and down the solemn old place, hanging my thoughts here on a crocket, there on a corbel; now on the gable-point over which Weir's face would gaze next morning,

and now on the aspiring peaks of the organ. I thus made the place a cell of thought and prayer. And when the next day came, I found the forms around me so interwoven with the forms of my thought, that I felt almost like one of the old monks who had built the place, so little did I find any check to my thought or utterance from its unfitness for the expression of my individual modernism. But not one atom the more did I incline to the evil fancy that God was more in the past than in the present; that He is more within the walls of the church, than in the unwalled sky and earth; or seek to turn backwards one step from a living Now to an entombed and consecrated Past.

One lovely Saturday, I had been out all the morning. I had not walked far, for I had sat in the various places longer than I had walked, my path lying through fields and copses, crossing a country road only now and then. I had my Greek Testament with me, and I read when

I sat, and thought when I walked. I remember well enough that I was going to preach about the cloud of witnesses, and explain to my people that this did not mean persons looking at, witnessing our behaviour—not so could any addition be made to the awfulness of the fact that the eye of God was upon us—but witnesses to the truth, people who did what God wanted them to do, come of it what might, whether a crown or a rack, scoffs or applause; to behold whose witnessing might well rouse all that was human and divine in us to chose our part with them and their Lord.—When I came home, I had an early dinner, and then betook myself to my Saturday's resort.—I had never had a room large enough to satisfy me before. Now my study was to my mind.

All through the slowly-fading afternoon, the autumn of the day, when the colours are richest and the shadows long and lengthening,

I paced my solemn old-thoughted church. Sometimes I went up into the pulpit and sat there, looking on the ancient walls which had grown up under men's hands that men might be helped to pray by the visible symbol of unity which the walls gave, and that the voice of the Spirit of God might be heard exhorting men to forsake the evil and choose the good. And I thought how many witnesses to the truth had knelt in those ancient pews. For as the great church is made up of numberless communities, so is the great shining orb of witness-bearers made up of millions of lesser orbs. All men and women of true heart bear individual testimony to the truth of God, saying, "I have trusted and found Him faithful." And the feeble light of the glowworm is yet light, pure, and good, and with a loveliness of its own. "So, O Lord," I said, "let my light shine before men." And I felt no fear of vanity in such a prayer, for I knew that the

glory to come of it is to God only—"that men may glorify their Father in heaven." And I knew that when we seek glory for ourselves, the light goes out, and the Horror that dwells in darkness breathes cold upon our spirits. And I remember that just as I thought thus, my eye was caught first by a yellow light that gilded the apex of the font-cover, which had been wrought like a flame or a bursting blossom: it was so old and worn, I never could tell which; and then by a red light all over a white marble tablet in the wall —the red of life on the cold hue of the grave. And this red light did not come from any work of man's device, but from the great window of the west, which little Gerard Weir wanted to help God to paint. I must have been in a happy mood that Saturday afternoon, for everything pleased me and made me happier; and all the church-forms about me blended and harmonised graciously with the

throne and footstool of God which I saw through the windows. And I lingered on till the night had come; till the church only gloomed about me, and had no shine; and then I found my spirit burning up the clearer, as a lamp which has been flaming all the day with light unseen becomes a glory in the room when the sun is gone down.

At length I felt tired, and would go home. Yet I lingered for a few moments in the vestry, thinking what hymns would harmonize best with the things I wanted to make my people think about. It was now almost quite dark out of doors—at least as dark as it would be.

Suddenly through the gloom I thought I heard a moan and a sob. I sat upright in my chair and listened. But I heard nothing more, and concluded I had deceived myself. After a few moments, I rose to go home and have some tea, and turned my mind rather away from than towards the subject of witness-bearing any

more for that night, lest I should burn the fuel of it out before I came to warm the people with it, and should have to blow its embers instead of flashing its light and heat upon them in gladness. So I left the church by my vestry-door, which I closed behind me, and took my way along the path through the clustering group of graves.

Again I heard a sob. This time I was sure of it. And there lay something dark upon one of the grassy mounds. I approached it, but it did not move. I spoke.

"Can I be of any use to you?" I said.

"No," returned an almost inaudible voice.

Though I did not know whose was the grave, I knew that no one had been buried there very lately, and if the grief were for the loss of the dead, it was more than probably aroused to fresh vigour by recent misfortune.

I stooped, and taking the figure by the arm, said,

"Come with me, and let us see what can be done for you."

I then saw that it was a youth—perhaps scarcely more than a boy. And as soon as I saw that, I knew that his grief could hardly be incurable. He returned no answer, but rose at once to his feet, and submitted to be led away. I took him the shortest road to my house through the shrubbery, brought him into the study, made him sit down in my easy-chair, and rang for lights and wine; for the dew had been falling heavily, and his clothes were quite dank. But when the wine came, he refused to take any.

"But you want it," I said.

"No, sir, I don't, indeed."

"Take some for my sake, then."

"I would rather not, sir."

"Why?"

"I promised my father a year ago, when I left home, that I would not drink anything

stronger than water. And I can't break my promise now."

"Where is your home?"

"In the village, sir."

"That wasn't your father's grave I found you upon, was it?"

"No, sir. It was my mother's."

"Then your father is still alive?"

"Yes, sir. You know him very well—Thomas Weir."

"Ah! He told me he had a son in London. Are you that son?"

"Yes, sir," answered the youth, swallowing a rising sob.

"Then what is the matter? Your father is a good friend of mine, and would tell you you might trust me."

"I don't doubt it, sir. But you won't believe me any more than my father."

By this time I had perused his person, his dress, and his countenance. He was of middle

size, but evidently not full grown. His dress was very decent. His face was pale and thin, and revealed a likeness to his father. He had blue eyes that looked full at me, and, as far as I could judge, betokened, along with the whole of his expression, an honest and sensitive nature. I found him very attractive, and was therefore the more emboldened to press for the knowledge of his story.

"I cannot promise to believe whatever you say; but almost I could. And if you tell me the truth, I like you too much already to be in great danger of doubting you: for you know the truth has a force of its own."

"I thought so till to-night," he answered. "But if my father would not believe me, how can I expect you to do so, sir?"

"Your father may have been too much troubled by your story to be able to do it justice. It is not a bit like your father to be unfair."

"No, sir. And so much the less chance of your believing me."

Somehow his talk prepossessed me still more in his favour. There was a certain refinement in it, a quality of dialogue which indicated thought, as I judged; and I became more and more certain that, whatever I might have to think of it when told, he would yet tell me the truth.

"Come, try me," I said.

"I will, sir. But I must begin at the beginning."

"Begin where you like. I have nothing more to do to-night, and you may take what time you please. But I will ring for tea first; for I dare say you have not made any promise about that."

A faint smile flickered on his face. He was evidently beginning to feel a little more comfortable.

"When did you arrive from London?" I asked.

"About two hours ago, I suppose."

"Bring tea, Mrs Pearson, and that cold chicken and ham, and plenty of toast. We are both hungry."

Mrs Pearson gave a questioning look at the lad, and departed to do her duty.

When she returned with the tray, I saw by the unconsciously eager way in which he looked at the eatables, that he had had nothing for some time; and so, even after we were left alone, I would not let him say a word till he had made a good meal. It was delightful to see how he ate. Few troubles will destroy a growing lad's hunger; and indeed it has always been to me a marvel how the feelings and the appetites affect each other. I have known grief actually make people, and not sensual people at all, quite hungry. At last I thought I had better not offer him any more.

After the tea-things had been taken away, I

put the candles out; and the moon, which had risen, nearly full, while we were at tea, shone into the room. I had thought that he might possibly find it easier to tell his story in the moonlight, which, if there were any shame in the recital, would not, by too much revelation, reduce him to the despair of Macbeth, when, feeling that he could contemplate his deed, but not his deed and himself together, he exclaimed,

"To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself."

So, sitting by the window in the moonlight, he told his tale. The moon lighted up his pale face as he told it, and gave rather a wild expression to his eyes, eager to find faith in me. —I have not much of the dramatic in me, I know; and I am rather a flat teller of stories on that account. I shall not, therefore, seeing there is no necessity for it, attempt to give the tale in his own words. But, indeed, when I

think of it, they did not differ so much from the form of my own, for he had, I presume, lost his provincialisms, and being, as I found afterwards, a reader of the best books that came in his way, had not caught up many cockneyisms instead.

He had filled a place in the employment of Messrs ——— & Co., large silk mercers, linen drapers, &c., &c., in London; for all the trades are mingled now. His work at first was to accompany one of the carts which delivered the purchases of the day; but, I presume because he showed himself to be a smart lad, they took him at length into the shop to wait behind the counter. This he did not like so much, but, as it was considered a rise in life, made no objection to the change.

He seemed to himself to get on pretty well. He soon learned all the marks on the goods intended to be understood by the shopmen, and within a few months believed that he was

found generally useful. He had as yet had no distinct department allotted to him, but was moved from place to place, according as the local pressure of business might demand.

"I confess," he said, "that I was not always satisfied with what was going on about me. I mean I could not help doubting if everything was done on the square, as they say. But nothing came plainly in my way, and so I could honestly say it did not concern me. I took care to be straightforward for my part, and, knowing only the prices marked for the sale of the goods, I had nothing to do with anything else. But one day, while I was showing a lady some handkerchiefs which were marked as *mouchoirs de Paris* —I don't know if I pronounce it right, sir—she said she did not believe they were French cambric; and I, knowing nothing about it, said nothing. But, happening to look up while we both stood silent, the lady examining the handkerchiefs,

and I doing nothing till she should have made up her mind, I caught sight of the eyes of the shop-walker, as they call the man who shows customers where to go for what they want, and sees that they are attended to. He is a fat man, dressed in black, with a great gold chain, which they say in the shop is only copper gilt. But that doesn't matter, only it would be the liker himself. He was standing staring at me. I could not tell what to make of it; but from that day I often caught him watching me, as if I had been a customer suspected of shop-lifting. Still I only thought he was very disagreeable, and tried to forget him.

"One day—the day before yesterday—two ladies, an old lady and a young one, came into the shop, and wanted to look at some shawls. It was dinner-time, and most of the men were in the house at their dinner. The shop-walker sent me to them, and then, I do believe, though I did not see him, stood behind a pillar to

watch me, as he had been in the way of doing more openly. I thought I had seen the ladies before, and though I could not then tell where, I am now almost sure they were Mrs and Miss Oldcastle, of the Hall. They wanted to buy a cashmere for the young lady. I showed them some. They wanted better. I brought the best we had, inquiring, that I might make no mistake. They asked the price. I told them. They said they were not good enough, and wanted to see some more. I told them they were the best we had. They looked at them again; said they were sorry, but the shawls were not good enough, and left the shop without buying anything. I proceeded to take the shawls up-stairs again, and, as I went, passed the shop-walker, whom I had not observed while I was attending to the ladies. '*You* r'e for no good, young man!' he said with a nasty sneer. 'What do you mean by that, Mr B.?' I asked, for his sneer made me

angry. 'You'll know before to-morrow,' he answered, and walked away. That same evening, as we were shutting up shop, I was sent for to the principal's room. The moment I entered, he said, 'You won't suit us, young man, I find. You had better pack up your box to-night, and be off to-morrow. There's your quarter's salary.' 'What have I done?' I asked in astonishment, and yet with a vague suspicion of the matter. 'It's not what you've done, but what you don't do,' he answered. 'Do you think we can afford to keep you here and pay you wages to send people away from the shop without buying? If you do, you're mistaken, that's all. You may go.' 'But what could I do?' I said. 'I suppose that spy, B——,'—I believe I said so, sir. 'Now, now, young man, none of your sauce!' said Mr ——. 'Honest people don't think about spies.' 'I thought it was for honesty you were getting rid of me,' I said.

Mr —— rose to his feet, his lips white, and pointed to the door. 'Take your money and be off. And mind you don't refer to me for a character. After such impudence I couldn't in conscience give you one.' Then, calming down a little when he saw I turned to go, 'You had better take to your hands again, for your head will never keep you. There, be off!' he said, pushing the money towards me, and turning his back to me. I could not touch it. 'Keep the money, Mr ——,' I said, It 'll make up for what you 've lost by me.' And I left the room at once without waiting for an answer.

"While I was packing my box, one of my chums came in, and I told him all about it. He is rather a good fellow, that, sir; but he laughed, and said, 'What a fool you are, Weir! *You* 'll never make your daily bread, and you needn't think it. If you knew what I know, you 'd have known better. And it 's

very odd it was about shawls, too. I'll tell you. As you're going away, you won't let it out. Mr ——' (that was the same who had just turned me away) 'was serving some ladies himself, for he wasn't above being in the shop, like his partner. They wanted the best Indian shawl they could get. None of those he showed them were good enough, for the ladies really didn't know one from another. They always go by the price you ask, and Mr —— knew that well enough. He had sent me up-stairs for the shawls, and as I brought them he said, "These are the best imported, madam." There were three ladies; and one shook her head, and another shook her head, and they all shook their heads. And then Mr —— was sorry, I believe you, that he had said they were the best. But you won't catch him in a trap! He's too old a fox for that.' I'm telling you, sir, what Johnson told me. 'He looked close down at the

shawls, as if he were short-sighted, though he could see as far as any man. "I beg your pardon, ladies," said he, "you 're right. I am quite wrong. What a stupid blunder to make! And yet they did deceive me. Here, Johnson, take these shawls away. How could you be so stupid? I will fetch the thing you want myself, ladies." So I went with him. He chose out three or four shawls, of the nicest patterns, from the very same lot, marked in the very same way, folded them differently, and gave them to me to carry down. "Now, ladies, here they are!" he said. "These are quite a different thing, as you will see; and, indeed they cost half as much again." In five minutes they had bought two of them, and paid just half as much more than he had asked for them the first time. That 's Mr ——! and that 's what you should have done if you had wanted to keep your place.'—But I assure you, sir, I

could not help being glad to be out of it."

"But there is nothing in all this to be miserable about," I said. "You did your duty."

"It would be all right, sir, if father believed me. I don't want to be idle, I'm sure."

"Does your father think you do?"

"I don't know what he thinks. He won't speak to me. I told my story—as much of it as he would let me, at least — but he wouldn't listen to me. He only said he knew better than that. I couldn't bear it. He always was rather hard upon us. I'm sure if you hadn't been so kind to me, sir, I don't know what I should have done by this time. I haven't another friend in the world."

"Yes, you have. Your Father in heaven is your friend."

"I don't know that, sir. I'm not good enough."

"That's quite true. But you would never

have done your duty if He had not been with you."

"*Do* you think so, sir?" he returned, eagerly.

"Indeed, I do. Everything good comes from the Father of lights. Every one that walks in any glimmering of light walks so far in *His* light. For there is no light—only darkness—comes from below. And man apart from God can generate no light. He's not meant to be separated from God, you see. And only think then what light He can give you if you will turn to Him and ask for it. What He has given you should make you long for more; for what you have is not enough—ah! far from it."

"I think I understand. But I didn't feel good at all in the matter. I didn't see any other way of doing."

"So much the better. We ought never to feel good. We are but unprofitable ser-

vants at best. There is no merit in doing your duty; only you would have been a poor wretched creature not to do as you did. And now, instead of making yourself miserable over the consequences of it, you ought to bear them like a man, with courage and hope, thanking God that He has made you suffer for righteousness' sake, and denied you the success and the praise of cheating. I will go to your father at once, and find out what he is thinking about it. For no doubt Mr —— has written to him with his version of the story. Perhaps he will be more inclined to believe you when he finds that I believe you."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" cried the lad, and jumped up from his seat to go with me.

"No," I said; "you had better stay where you are. I shall be able to speak more freely if you are not present. Here is a book to amuse yourself with. I do not think I shall be long gone."

But I was longer gone than I thought I should be.

When I reached the carpenter's house, I found, to my surprise, that he was still at work. By the light of a single tallow candle placed beside him on the bench, he was ploughing away at a groove. His pale face, of which the lines were unusually sharp, as I might have expected after what had occurred, was the sole object that reflected the light of the candle to my eyes as I entered the gloomy place. He looked up, but without even greeting me, dropped his face again and went on with his work.

"What!" I said, cheerily,—for I believed that, like Gideon's pitcher, I held dark within me the light that would discomfit his Midianites, which consciousness may well make the pitcher cheery inside, even while the light as yet is all its own—worthless, till it break out upon the world, and cease to illuminate only

glazed pitcher-sides—"What!" I said, "working so late?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is not usual with you, I know."

"It's all a humbug!" he said fiercely, but coldly notwithstanding, as he stood erect from his work, and turned his white face full on me —of which, however, the eyes drooped—"It's all a humbug; and I don't mean to be humbugged any more."

"Am I a humbug?" I returned, not quite taken by surprise.

"I don't say that. Don't make a personal thing of it, sir. You're taken in, I believe, like the rest of us. Tell me that a God governs the world! What have I done, to be used like this?"

I thought with myself how I could retort for his young son: "What has he done to be used like this?" But that was not my way, though it might work well enough in some

hands. Some men are called to be prophets. I could only "stand and wait."

"It would be wrong in me to pretend ignorance," I said, "of what you mean. I know all about it."

"Do you? He has been to you, has he? But you don't know all about it, sir. The impudence of the young rascal!"

He paused for a moment.

"A man like me!" he resumed, becoming eloquent in his indignation, and, as I thought afterwards, entirely justifying what Wordsworth says about the language of the so-called uneducated,—"A man like me, who was as proud of his honour as any aristocrat in the country—prouder than any of them would grant me the right to be!"

"Too proud of it, I think—not too careful of it," I said. But I was thankful he did not heed me, for the speech would only have irritated him. He went on.

"Me to be treated like this! One child a . . . . "

Here came a terrible break in his speech. But he tried again.

"And the other a . . . "

Instead of finishing the sentence, however, he drove his plough fiercely through the groove, splitting off some inches of the wall of it at the end.

"If any one has treated you so," I said, "it must be the devil, not God."

"But if there was a God, He could have prevented it all."

"Mind what I said to you once before: He hasn't done yet. And there is another enemy in his way as bad as the devil—I mean our *selves*. When people want to walk their own way without God, God lets them try it. And then the devil gets a hold of them. But God won't let him keep them. As soon as they are 'wearied in the greatness of their way,' they

begin to look about for a Saviour. And then they find God ready to pardon, ready to help, not breaking the bruised reed—leading them to His own self manifest—with whom no man can fear any longer, Jesus Christ, the righteous lover of men—their elder brother—what we call *big brother*, you know—one to help them and take their part against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and all the rest of the wicked powers. So you see God is tender—just like the prodigal son's father—only with this difference, that God has millions of prodigals, and never gets tired of going out to meet them and welcome them back, every one as if he were the only prodigal son He had ever had. There 's a father indeed ! Have you been such a father to your son ? "

" The prodigal didn't come with a pack of lies. He told his father the truth, bad as it was."

" How do you know that your son didn't

tell you the truth? All the young men that go from home don't do as the prodigal did. Why should you not believe what he tells you?"

"I 'm not one to reckon without my host. Here 's my bill."

And so saying, he handed me a letter. I took it and read:—

"SIR,—It has become our painful duty to inform you that your son has this day been discharged from the employment of Messrs —— and Co., his conduct not being such as to justify the confidence hitherto reposed in him. It would have been contrary to the interests of the establishment to continue him longer behind the counter, although we are not prepared to urge anything against him beyond the fact that he has shown himself absolutely indifferent to the interests of his employers. We trust that the chief blame will be found to

lie with certain connexions of a kind easy to be formed in large cities, and that the loss of his situation may be punishment sufficient, if not for justice, yet to make him consider his ways and be wise. We enclose his quarter's salary, which the young man rejected with insult, and,

"We remain, &c.,

"—— and Co."

"And," I exclaimed, "this is what you found your judgment of your own son upon! You reject him unheard, and take the word of a stranger! I don't wonder you cannot believe in your Father when you behave so to your son. I don't say your conclusion is false, though I don't believe it. But I do say the grounds you go upon are anything but sufficient."

"You don't mean to tell me that a man of Mr ——'s standing, who has one of the largest

shops in London, and whose brother is Mayor of Addicehead, would slander a poor lad like that?"

"Oh you mammon-worshipper!" I cried. "Because a man has one of the largest shops in London and his brother is Mayor of Addicehead, you take his testimony and refuse your son's! I did not know the boy till this evening; but I call upon you to bring back to your memory all that you have known of him from his childhood, and then ask yourself whether there is not at least as much probability of his having remained honest as of the master of a great London shop being infallible in his conclusions—at which conclusions, whatever they be, I confess no man can wonder, after seeing how readily his father listens to his defamation."

I spoke with warmth. Before I had done, the pale face of the carpenter was red as fire; for he had been acting contrary to all his own

theories of human equality, and that in a shameful manner. Still, whether convinced or not, he would not give in. He only drove away at his work, which he was utterly destroying. His mouth was closed so tight, he looked as if he had his jaw locked; and his eyes gleamed over the ruined board with a light which seemed to me to have more of obstinacy in it than contrition."

"Ah, Thomas!" I said, taking up the speech once more, "if God had behaved to us as you have behaved to your boy—be he innocent, be he guilty—there's not a man or woman of all our lost race would have returned to Him from the time of Adam till now. I don't wonder that you find it difficult to believe in Him."

And with those words I left the shop, determined to overwhelm the unbeliever with proof, and put him to shame before his own soul, whence, I thought, would come even more good to him than to his son. For there

was a great deal of self-satisfaction mixed up with the man's honesty, and the sooner that had a blow the better—it might prove a death-blow in the long run. It was pride that lay at the root of his hardness. He visited the daughter's fault upon the son. His daughter had disgraced him; and he was ready to flash into wrath with his son upon any imputation which recalled to him the torture he had undergone when his daughter's dishonour came first to the light. Her he had never forgiven, and now his pride flung his son out after her upon the first suspicion. His imagination had filled up all the blanks in the wicked insinuations of Mr ——. He concluded that he had taken money to spend in the worst company, and had so disgraced him beyond forgiveness. His pride paralysed his love. He thought more about himself than about his children. His own shame outweighed in his estimation the sadness of their guilt. It was a less

matter that they should be guilty, than that he, their father, should be disgraced.

Thinking over all this, and forgetting how late it was, I found myself half-way up the avenue of the Hall. I wanted to find out whether young Weir's fancy that the ladies he had failed in serving, or rather whom he had really served with honesty, were Mrs and Miss Oldcastle, was correct. What a point it would be if it was! I should not then be satisfied except I could prevail on Miss Oldcastle to accompany me to Thomas Weir, and shame the faithlessness out of him. So eager was I after certainty, that it was not till I stood before the house that I saw clearly the impropriety of attempting anything further that night. One light only was burning in the whole front, and that was on the first floor.

Glancing up at it, I knew not why, as I turned to go down the hill again, I saw a corner of the blind drawn aside and a face

peeping out—whose, I could not tell. This was uncomfortable—for what could be taking me there at such a time? But I walked steadily away, certain I could not escape recognition, and determining to refer to this ill-considered visit when I called the next day. I would not put it off till Monday, I was resolved.

I lingered on the bridge as I went home. Not a light was to be seen in the village, except one over Catherine Weir's shop. There were not many restless souls in my parish—not so many as there ought to be. Yet gladly would I see the troubled in peace — not a moment, though, before their troubles should have brought them where the weary and heavy-laden can alone find rest to their souls —finding the Father's peace in the Son—the Father himself reconciling them to Himself.

How still the night was! My soul hung, as it were, suspended in stillness; for the whole

sphere of heaven seemed to be about me, the stars above shining as clear below in the mirror of the all but motionless water. It was a pure type of the "rest that remaineth"—rest, the one immovable centre wherein lie all the stores of might, whence issue all forces, all influences of making and moulding. "And, indeed," I said to myself, "after all the noise, uproar, and strife that there is on the earth, after all the tempests, earthquakes, and volcanic outbursts, there is yet more of peace than of tumult in the world. How many nights like this glide away in loveliness, when deep sleep hath fallen upon men, and they know neither how still their own repose, nor how beautiful the sleep of nature! Ah, what must the stillness of the kingdom be? When the heavenly day's work is done, with what a gentle wing will the night come down! But I bethink me, the rest there, as here, will be the presence of God; and if we have Him

with us, the battle-field itself will be—if not quiet, yet as full of peace as this night of stars." So I spoke to myself, and went home.

I had little immediate comfort to give my young guest, but I had plenty of hope. I told him he must stay in the house to-morrow; for it would be better to have the reconciliation with his father over before he appeared in public. So the next day neither Weir was at church.

As soon as the afternoon service was over, I went once more to the Hall, and was shown into the drawing-room—a great faded room, in which the prevailing colour was a dingy gold, hence called the yellow drawing-room when the house had more than one. It looked down upon the lawn, which, although little expense was now laid out on any of the ornamental adjuncts of the Hall, was still kept very nice. There sat Mrs Oldcastle reading,

with her face to the house. A little way farther off, Miss Oldcastle sat, with a book on her knee, but her gaze fixed on the wide-spread landscape before her, of which, however, she seemed to be as inobservant as of her book. I caught glimpses of Judy flitting hither and thither among the trees, never a moment in one place.

Fearful of having an interview with the old lady alone, which was not likely to lead to what I wanted, I stepped from a window which was open, out upon the terrace, and thence down the steps to the lawn below. The servant had just informed Mrs Oldcastle of my visit when I came near. She drew herself up in her chair, and evidently chose to regard my approach as an intrusion.

"I did not expect a visit from you to-day, Mr Walton, you will allow me to say."

"I am doing Sunday work," I answered. "Will you kindly tell me whether you were

in London on Thursday last? But stay, allow me to ask Miss Oldcastle to join us."

Without waiting for answer, I went to Miss Oldcastle, and begged her to come and listen to something in which I wanted her help. She rose courteously though without cordiality, and accompanied me to her mother, who sat with perfect rigidity, watching us.

"Again let me ask," I said, "if you were in London on Thursday."

Though I addressed the old lady, the answer came from her daughter."

"Yes, we were."

"Were you in —— & Co.'s, in —— Street?"

But now before Miss Oldcastle could reply, her mother interposed.

"Are we charged with shoplifting, Mr Walton? Really, one is not accustomed to such cross-questioning—except from a lawyer."

"Have patience with me for a moment," I returned. "I am not going to be mysterious

for more than two or three questions. Please tell me whether you were in that shop or not."

"I believe we were," said the mother.

"Yes, certainly," said the daughter.

"Did you buy anything?"

"No. We——" Miss Oldcastle began.

"Not a word more," I exclaimed eagerly. "Come with me at once."

"What *do* you mean, Mr Walton?" said the mother, with a sort of cold indignation, while the daughter looked surprised, but said nothing.

"I beg your pardon for my impetuosity; but much is in your power at this moment. The son of one of my parishioners has come home in trouble. His father, Thomas Weir——"

"Ah!" said Mrs Oldcastle, in a tone considerably at strife with refinement. But I took no notice.

"His father will not believe his story. The

lad thinks you were the ladies in serving whom he got into trouble. I am so confident he tells the truth, that I want Miss Oldcastle to be so kind as to accompany me to Weir's house——"

"Really, Mr Walton, I am astonished at your making such a request!" exclaimed Mrs Oldcastle, with suitable emphasis on every salient syllable, while her white face flushed with anger. "To ask Miss Oldcastle to accompany you to the dwelling of the ring-leader of all the *canaille* of the neighbourhood!"

"It is for the sake of justice," I interposed.

"That is no concern of ours. Let them fight it out between them. I am sure any trouble that comes of it is no more than they all deserve. A low family—men and women of them!"

"I assure you, I think very differently."

"I daresay you do."

"But neither your opinion nor mine has anything to do with the matter."

Here I turned to Miss Oldcastle and went on—

"It is a chance which seldom occurs in one's life, Miss Oldcastle—a chance of setting wrong right by a word; and as a minister of the gospel of truth and love, I beg you to assist me with your presence to that end."

I would have spoken more strongly, but I knew that her word given to me would be enough without her presence. At the same time, I felt not only that there would be a propriety in her taking a personal interest in the matter, but that it would do her good, and tend to create a favour towards each other in some of my flock between whom at present there seemed to be nothing in common.

But at my last words, Mrs Oldcastle rose to her feet, no longer red—now whiter than her usual whiteness with passion.

"You dare to persist! You take advantage of your profession to persist in dragging my daughter into a vile dispute between mechanics of the lowest class!—against the positive command of her only parent! Have you no respect for her position in society?—for her sex? *Mr Walton*, you act in a manner unworthy of your cloth."

I had stood looking in her eyes with as much self-possession as I could muster. And I believe I should have borne it all quietly, but for that last word.

If there is one epithet I hate more than another, it is that execrable word *cloth*—used for the office of a clergyman. I have no time to set forth its offence now. If my reader cannot feel it, I do not care to make him feel it. Only I am sorry to say it overcame my temper.

"Madam," I said, "I owe nothing to my tailor. But I owe God my whole being, and

my neighbour all I can do for him. 'He that loveth not his brother is a murderer,' or murderess, as the case may be."

At that word *murderess*, her face became livid, and she turned away without reply. By this time her daughter was half way to the house. She followed her. And here was I left to go home, with the full knowledge that, partly from trying to gain too much, and partly from losing my temper, I had at best but a mangled and unsatisfactory testimony to carry back to Thomas Weir. Of course I walked away—round the end of the house and down the avenue; and the further I went the more mortified I grew. It was not merely the shame of losing my temper, though that was a shame—and with a woman too, merely because she used a common epithet!—but I saw that it must appear very strange to the carpenter that I was not able to give a more explicit account of some sort, what I had

learned not being in the least decisive in the matter. It only amounted to this, that Mrs and Miss Oldcastle were in the shop on the very day on which Weir was dismissed. It proved that so much of what he had told me was correct—nothing more. And if I tried to better the matter by explaining how I had offended them, would it not deepen the very hatred I had hoped to overcome? In fact, I stood convicted before the tribunal of my own conscience of having lost all the certain good of my attempt, in part at least from the foolish desire to produce a conviction *of* Weir rather than *in* Weir, which should be triumphant after a melo-dramatic fashion, and—must I confess it?—should *punish* him for not believing in his son when *I* did; forgetting in my miserable selfishness that not to believe his son was an unspeakably worse punishment in itself than any conviction or consequent shame brought about by the most overwhelm-

ing of stage-effects. I assure my reader, I felt humiliated.

Now I think humiliation is a very different condition of mind from humility. Humiliation no man can desire: it is shame and torture. Humility is the true, right condition of humanity—peaceful, divine. And yet a man may gladly welcome humiliation when it comes, if he finds that with fierce shock and rude revulsion it has turned him right round, with his face away from pride, whither he was travelling, and towards humility, however far away upon the horizon's verge she may sit waiting for him. To me, however, there came a gentle and not therefore less effective dissolution of the bonds both of pride and humiliation; and before Weir and I met, I was nearly as anxious to heal his wounded spirit, as I was to work justice for his son.

I was walking slowly, with burning cheek and downcast eyes, the one of conflict, the

other of shame and defeat, away from the great house, which seemed to be staring after me down the avenue with all its window-eyes, when suddenly my deliverance came. At a somewhat sharp turn, where the avenue changed into a winding road, Miss Oldcastle stood waiting for me, the glow of haste upon her cheek, and the firmness of resolution upon her lips. Once more I was startled by her sudden presence, but she did not smile.

"Mr Walton, what do you want me to do? I would not willingly refuse, if it is, as you say, really my duty to go with you."

"I cannot be positive about that," I answered. "I think I put it too strongly. But it would be a considerable advantage, I think, if you *would* go with me and let me ask you a few questions in the presence of Thomas Weir. It will have more effect if I am able to tell him that I have only learned as yet that you

were in the shop on that day, and refer him to you for the rest."

"I will go."

"A thousand thanks. But how did you manage to ——?"

Here I stopped, not knowing how to finish the question.

"You are surprised that I came, notwithstanding mamma's objection to my going?"

"I confess I am. I should not have been surprised at Judy's doing so, now."

She was silent for a moment.

"Do you think obedience to parents is to last for ever? The honour is, of course. But I am surely old enough to be right in following my conscience at least."

"You mistake me. That is not the difficulty at all. Of course you ought to do what is right against the highest authority on earth, which I take to be just the parental. What I am surprised at is your courage."

"Not because of its degree, only that it is mine."

And she sighed.—She was quite right, and I did not know what to answer. But she resumed.

"I know I am cowardly. But if I cannot dare, I can bear. Is it not strange?—With my mother looking at me, I dare not say a word, dare hardly move against her will. And it is not always a good will. I cannot honour my mother as I would. But the moment her eyes are off me, I can do anything, knowing the consequences perfectly, and just as regardless of them; for, as I tell you, Mr Walton, I can endure; and you do not know what that might *come* to mean with my mother. Once she kept me shut up in my room, and sent me only bread and water, for a whole week to the very hour. Not that I minded that much, but it will let you know a little of my position in my own home. That is why I

walked away before her. I saw what was coming."

And Miss Oldcastle drew herself up with more expression of pride than I had yet seen in her, revealing to me that perhaps I had hitherto quite misunderstood the source of her apparent haughtiness. I could not reply for indignation. My silence must have been the cause of what she said next.

"Ah! you think I have no right to speak so about my own mother! Well! well! But indeed I would not have done so a month ago."

"If I am silent, Miss Oldcastle, it is that my sympathy is too strong for me. There are mothers and mothers. And for a mother not to be a mother is too dreadful."

She made no reply. I resumed.

"It will seem cruel, perhaps;—certainly in saying it, I lay myself open to the rejoinder that talk is *so* easy;—still I shall feel more

honest when I have said it: the only thing I feel should be altered in your conduct—forgive me—is that you should *dare* your mother. Do not think, for it is an unfortunate phrase, that my meaning is a vulgar one. If it were, I should at least know better than to utter it to you. What I mean is, that you ought to be able to be and do the same before your mother's eyes, that you are and do when she is out of sight. I mean that you should look in your mother's eyes, and do what is *right*."

"I *know* that—know it *well*." (She emphasized the words as I do.) "But you do not know what a spell she casts upon me; how impossible it is to do as you say."

"Difficult, I allow. Impossible, not. You will never be free till you do so."

"You are too hard upon me. Besides, though you will scarcely be able to believe it now, I *do* honour her, and cannot help feeling

that by doing as I do, I avoid irreverence, impertinence, rudeness—whichever is the right word for what I mean."

"I understand you perfectly. But the truth is more than propriety of behaviour, even to a parent; and indeed has in it a deeper reverence, or the germ of it at least, than any adherence to the mere code of respect. If you once did as I want you to do, you would find that in reality you both revered and loved your mother more than you do now."

"You may be right. But I am certain you speak without any real idea of the difficulty."

"That may be. And yet what I say remains just as true."

"How could I meet *violence*, for instance?"

"Impossible!"

She returned no reply. We walked in silence for some minutes. At length she said,

"My mother's self-will amounts to madness, I do believe. I have yet to learn where she would stop of herself."

"All self-will is madness," I returned—stupidly enough. For what is the use of making general remarks when you have a terrible concrete before you? "To want one's own way just and only because it is one's own way is the height of madness."

"Perhaps. But when madness has to be encountered as if it were sense, it makes it no easier to know that it is madness."

"Does your uncle give you no help?"

"He! Poor man! He is as frightened at her as I am. He dares not even go away. He did not know what he was coming to when he came to Oldcastle Hall. Dear uncle! I owe him a great deal. But for any help of that sort, he is of no more use than a child. I believe mamma looks upon him as half an idiot. He can do anything or everything but

help one to live, to *be* anything. Oh me! I *am* so tired!"

And the *proud* lady, as I had thought her, perhaps not incorrectly, burst out crying.

What was I to do? I did not know in the least. What I said, I do not even now know. But by this time we were at the gate, and as soon as we had passed the guardian monstrosities, we found the open road an effectual antidote to tears. When we came within sight of the old house where Weir lived, Miss Oldcastle became again a little curious as to what I required of her.

"Trust me," I said. "There is nothing mysterious about it. Only I prefer the truth to come out fresh in the ears of the man most concerned."

"I do trust you," she answered. And we knocked at the house-door.

Thomas Weir himself opened the door, with a candle in his hand. He looked very much

astonished to see his lady-visitor. He asked us, politely enough, to walk up-stairs, and ushered us into the large room I have already described. There sat the old man, as I had first seen him, by the side of the fire. He received us with more than politeness—with courtesy; and I could not help glancing at Miss Oldcastle to see what impression this family of "low, free-thinking republicans" made upon her. It was easy to discover that the impression was of favourable surprise. But I was as much surprised at her behaviour as she was at theirs. Not a haughty tone was to be heard in her voice; not a haughty movement to be seen in her form. She accepted the chair offered her, and sat down, perfectly at home, by the fire-side, only that she turned towards me, waiting for what explanation I might think proper to give.

Before I had time to speak, however, old Mr Weir broke the silence.

"I've been telling Tom, sir, as I've told him many a time afore, as how he's a deal too hard with his children."

"Father!" interrupted Thomas, angrily.

"Have patience a bit, my boy," persisted the old man, turning again towards me.—"Now, sir, he won't even hear young Tom's side of the story; and I say that boy won't tell him no lie if he's the same boy he went away."

"I tell you, father," again began Thomas; but this time I interposed, to prevent useless talk beforehand.

"Thomas," I said, "listen to me. I have heard your son's side of the story. Because of something he said, I went to Miss Oldcastle, and asked her whether she was in his late master's shop last Thursday. That is all I have asked her, and all she has told me is that she was. I know no more than you what she is going to reply to my questions now, but I

have no doubt her answers will correspond to your son's story.

I then put my questions to Miss Oldcastle, whose answers amounted to this:—That they had wanted to buy a shawl; that they had seen none good enough; that they had left the shop without buying anything; and that they had been waited upon by a young man, who, while perfectly polite and attentive to their wants, did not seem to have the ways or manners of a London shop-lad.

I then told them the story as young Tom had related it to me, and asked if his sister was not in the house and might not go to fetch him. But she was with her sister Catherine.

"I think, Mr Walton, if you have done with me, I ought to go home now," said Miss Oldcastle.

"Certainly," I answered. "I will take you home at once. I am greatly obliged to you for coming."

"Indeed, sir," said the old man, rising with difficulty, "we're obliged both to you and the lady more than we can tell. To take such a deal of trouble for us! But you see, sir, you're one of them as thinks a man's got his duty to do one way or another, whether he be clergyman or carpenter. God bless you, Miss. You're of the right sort, which you'll excuse an old man, Miss, as'll never see ye again till ye've got the wings as you ought to have."

Miss Oldcastle smiled very sweetly, and answered nothing, but shook hands with them both, and bade them good-night. Weir could not speak a word; he could hardly even lift his eyes. But a red spot glowed on each of his pale cheeks, making him look very like his daughter Catherine, and I could see Miss Oldcastle wince and grow red too with the gripe he gave her hand. But she smiled again none the less sweetly.

"I will see Miss Oldcastle home, and then

go back to my house and bring the boy with me," I said, as we left.

It was some time before either of us spoke. The sun was setting, the sky the earth and the air lovely with rosy light, and the world full of that peculiar calm which belongs to the evening of the day of rest. Surely the world ought to wake better on the morrow.

"Not very dangerous people, those, Miss Oldcastle?" I said at last.

"I thank you very much for taking me to see them," she returned, cordially.

"You won't believe all you may happen to hear against the working people now?"

"I never did."

"There are ill-conditioned, cross-grained, low-minded, selfish, unbelieving people amongst them. God knows it. But there are ladies and gentlemen amongst them too."

"That old man is a gentleman."

"He is. And the only way to teach them

all to be such, is to be such to them. The man who does not show himself a gentleman to the working people—why should I call them the poor? some of them are better off than many of the rich, for they can pay their debts, and do it ——"

I had forgot the beginning of my sentence.

"You were saying that the man who does not show himself a gentleman to the poor ——"

"Is no gentleman at all—only a gentle without the man; and if you consult my namesake old Izaak, you will find what that is."

"I will look. I know your way now. You won't tell me anything I can find out for myself."

"Is it not the best way?"

"Yes. Because, for one thing, you find out so much more than you look for."

"Certainly that has been my own experience."

"Are you a descendant of Izaak Walton?"

"No. I believe there are none. But I hope I have so much of his spirit that I can do two things like him."

"Tell me."

"Live in the country, though I was not brought up in it; and know a good man when I see him."

"I am very glad you asked me to go to-night."

"If people only knew their own brothers and sisters, the kingdom of heaven would not be far off."

I do not think Miss Oldcastle quite liked this, for she was silent thereafter; though I allow that her silence was not conclusive. And we had now come close to the house.

"I wish I could help you," I said.

"In what?"

"To bear what I fear is waiting you."

"I told you I was equal to that. It is

where we are unequal that we want help. You may have to give it me some day—who knows?"

I left her most unwillingly in the porch, just as Sarah (the white wolf) had her hand on the door, rejoicing in my heart, however, over her last words.

My reader will not be surprised, after all this, if, before I get very much further with my story, I have to confess that I loved Miss Oldcastle.

When young Tom and I entered the room, his grandfather rose and tottered to meet him. His father made one step towards him and then hesitated. Of all conditions of the human mind that of being ashamed of himself must have been the strangest to Thomas Weir. The man had never in his life, I believe, done anything mean or dishonest, and therefore he had had less frequent opportunities than most people of being ashamed of him-

self. Hence his fall had been from another pinnacle—that of pride. When a man thinks it such a fine thing to have done right, he might almost as well have done wrong, for it shows he considers right something *extra*, not absolutely essential to human existence, not the life of a man. I call it Thomas Weir's fall; for surely to behave in an unfatherly manner to both daughter and son—the one sinful, and therefore needing the more tenderness—the other innocent, and therefore claiming justification—and to do so from pride, and hurt pride, was fall enough in one history, worse a great deal than many sins that go by harder names; for the world's judgment of wrong does not exactly correspond with the reality. And now if he was humbled in the one instance, there would be room to hope he might become humble in the other. But I had soon to see that, for a time, his pride, driven from its entrenchment against his son,

only retreated, with all its forces, into the other against his daughter.

Before a moment had passed, justice overcame so far that he held out his hand and said:

"Come, Tom, let by-gones be by-gones."

But I stepped between.

"Thomas Weir," I said, "I have too great a regard for you,—and you know I dare not flatter you—to let you off this way, or rather leave you to think you have done your duty when you have not done the half of it. You have done your son a wrong, a great wrong. How can you claim to be a gentleman—I say nothing of being a Christian, for therein you make no claim—how, I say, can you claim to act like a gentleman, if, having done a man wrong—his being your own son has nothing to do with the matter one way or other, except that it ought to make you see your duty more easily—having done him wrong, why don't you beg his pardon, I say, like a man?"

He did not move a step. But young Tom stepped hurriedly forward, and catching his father's hand in both of his, cried out:

"My father shan't beg my pardon. I beg yours, father, for everything I ever did to displease you, but I *wasn't* to blame in this. I wasn't, indeed."

"Tom, I beg your pardon," said the hard man, overcome at last. "And now, sir," he added, turning to me, "will you let by-gones be by-gones between my boy and me?"

There was just a touch of bitterness in his tone.

"With all my heart," I replied. "But I want just a word with you in the shop before I go."

"Certainly," he answered, stiffly; and I bade the old and the young man good-night, and followed him down stairs.

"Thomas, my friend," I said, when we got into the shop, laying my hand on his shoulder,

"will you after this say that God has dealt hardly with you? There's a son for any man God ever made to give thanks for on his knees! Thomas, you have a strong sense of fair play in your heart, and you *give* fair play neither to your own son nor yet to God himself. You close your doors and brood over your own miseries, and the wrongs people have done you; whereas, if you would but open those doors, you might come out into the light of God's truth, and see that His heart is as clear as sunlight towards you. You won't believe this, and therefore naturally you can't quite believe that there is a God at all; for, indeed, a being that was not all light would be no God at all. If you would but let Him teach you, you would find your perplexities melt away like the snow in spring, till you could hardly believe you had ever felt them. No arguing will convince you of a God; but let Him once come in, and all argument will be

tenfold useless to convince you that there is no God. Give God justice. Try Him as I have said.—Good-night."

He did not return my farewell with a single word. But the grasp of his strong rough hand was more earnest and loving even than usual. I could not see his face, for it was almost dark; but, indeed, I felt that it was better I could not see it.

I went home as peaceful in my heart as the night whose curtains God had drawn about the earth that it might sleep till the morrow.

CHAPTER III.

MY PUPIL.

ALTHOUGH I do happen to know how Miss Oldcastle fared that night after I left her, the painful record is not essential to my story. Besides, I have hitherto recorded only those things "quorum pars magna"—or *minima*, as the case may be—"fui." There is one exception, old Weir's story, for the introduction of which my reader cannot yet see the artistic reason. For whether a story be real in fact, or only real in meaning, there must always be an idea, or artistic model in the brain, after which it is fashioned :

in the latter case one of invention, in the former case one of choice.

In the middle of the following week I was returning from a visit I had paid to Tomkins and his wife, when I met, in the only street of the village, my good and honoured friend Dr Duncan. Of course I saw him often—and I beg my reader to remember that this is no diary, but only a gathering together of some of the more remarkable facts of my history, admitting of being ideally grouped—but this time I recall distinctly because the interview bore upon many things.

"Well, Doctor Duncan," I said, "busy as usual fighting the devil?"

"Ah, my dear Mr Walton," returned the doctor—and a kind word from him went a long way into my heart—"I know what you mean. You fight the devil from the inside, and I fight him from the outside. My chance is a poor one."

"It would be, perhaps, if you were confined to outside remedies. But what an opportunity your profession gives you of attacking the enemy from the inside as well! And you have this advantage over us, that no man can say it belongs to your profession to say such things, and *therefore* disregard them."

"Ah, Mr Walton, I have too great a respect for your profession to dare to interfere with it. The doctor in 'Macbeth,' you know, could

> 'not minister to a mind diseased,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart.'"

"What a memory you have! But you don't think I can do that any more than you?"

"You know the best medicine to give, anyhow. I wish I always did. But you see we have no *theriaca* now."

"Well, we have. For the Lord says, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.'"

"There! I told you! That will meet all diseases."

"Strangely now, there comes into my mind a line of Chaucer, with which I will make a small return for your quotation from Shakespeare. You have mentioned *theriaca;* and I, without thinking of this line, quoted our Lord's words. Chaucer brings the two together, for the word *triacle* is merely a corruption of *theriaca*, the unfailing cure for every thing.

'Crist, which that is to every harm triacle.'"

"That is delightful: I thank you. And that is in Chaucer?"

"Yes. In the Man-of-Law's Tale."

"Shall I tell you how I was able to quote so correctly from Shakespeare? I have just come from referring to the passage. And I mention that because I want to tell you what made me think of the passage. I had been to see poor Catherine Weir. I think she is not long for this world. She has a bad cough, and I fear her lungs are going."

"I am concerned to hear that. I considered her very delicate, and am not surprised. But I wish, I do wish, I had got a little hold of her before, that I might be of some use to her now. Is she in immediate danger, do you think?"

"No, I do not think so. But I have no expectation of her recovery. Very likely she will just live through the winter and die in the spring. Those patients so often go as the flowers come! All her coughing, poor woman, will not cleanse her stuffed bosom. The perilous stuff weighs on her

heart, as Shakespeare says, as well as on her lungs."

"Ah, dear! What is it, doctor, that weighs upon her heart? Is it shame, or what is it? for she is so uncommunicative that I hardly know anything at all about her yet."

"I cannot tell. She has the faculty of silence."

"But do not think I complain that she has not made me her confessor. I only mean that if she would talk at all, one would have a chance of knowing something of the state of her mind, and so might give her some help."

"Perhaps she will break down all at once, and open her mind to you. I have not told her she is dying. I think a medical man ought at least to be quite sure before he dares to say such a thing. I have known a long life injured, to human view at least, by the

medical verdict in youth of ever imminent death."

"Certainly one has no right to say what God is going to do with any one till he knows it beyond a doubt. Illness has its own peculiar mission, independent of any association with coming death, and may often work better when mingled with the hope of life. I mean, we must take care of presumption when we measure God's plans by our theories. But could you not suggest something, Doctor Duncan, to guide me in trying to do my duty by her?"

"I cannot. You see you don't know what she is *thinking*; and till you know that, I presume you will agree with me that all is an aim in the dark. How can I prescribe, without *some* diagnosis? It is just one of those few cases in which one would like to have the authority of the Catholic priests to urge confession with. I do not think

anything will save her life, as we say, but you have taught some of us to think of the life that belongs to the spirit as *the* life; and I do believe confession would do everything for that."

"Yes, if made to God. But I will grant that communication of one's sorrows or even sins to a wise brother of mankind may help to a deeper confession to the Father in heaven. But I have no wish for *authority* in the matter. Let us see whether the Spirit of God working in her may not be quite as powerful for a final illumination of her being as the *fiat confessio* of a priest. I have no confidence in *forcing* in the moral or spiritual garden. A hothouse development must necessarily be a sickly one, rendering the plant unfit for the normal life of the open air. Wait. We must not hurry things. She will perhaps come to me of herself before long. But I will call and inquire after her."

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We parted; and I went at once to Catherine Weir's shop. She received me much as usual, which was hardly to be called receiving at all. Perhaps there was a doubtful shadow, not of more cordiality, but of less repulsion in it. Her eyes were full of a stony brilliance, and the flame of the fire that was consuming her glowed upon her cheeks more brightly, I thought, than ever; but that might be fancy, occasioned by what the doctor had said about her. Her hand trembled, but her demeanour was perfectly calm.

"I am sorry to hear you are complaining, Miss Weir," I said.

"I suppose Dr Duncan told you so, sir. But I am quite well. I did not send for him. He called of himself, and wanted to persuade me I was ill."

I understood that she felt injured by his interference.

"You should attend to his advice, though.

He is a prudent man, and not in the least given to alarming people without cause."

She returned no answer. So I tried another subject.

"What a fine fellow your brother is!"

"Yes; he grows very much."

"Has your father found another place for him yet?"

"I don't know. My father never tells me about any of his doings."

"But don't you go and talk to him, sometimes?"

"No. He does not care to see me."

"I am going there now: will you come with me?"

"Thank you. I never go where I am not wanted."

"But it is not right that father and daughter should live as you do. Suppose he may not have been so kind to you as he ought, you should not cherish resentment against him

for it. That only makes matters worse, you know."

"I never said to human being that he had been unkind to me."

"And yet you let every person in the village know it."

"How?"

Her eye had no longer the stony glitter. It flashed now.

"You are never seen together. You scarcely speak when you meet. Neither of you crosses the other's threshold."

"It is not my fault."

"It is not *all* your fault, I know. But do you think you can go to a heaven at last where you will be able to keep apart from each other, he in his house and you in your house, without any sign that it was through this father on earth that you were born into the world which the Father in heaven redeemed by the gift of His own Son?"

She was silent; and, after a pause, I went on.

"I believe, in my heart, that you love your father. I could not believe otherwise of you. And you will never be happy till you have made it up with him. Have you done him no wrong?"

At these words, her face turned white—with anger, I could see—all but those spots on her cheek-bones, which shone out in dreadful contrast to the deathly paleness of the rest of her face. Then the returning blood surged violently from her heart, and the red spots were lost in one crimson glow. She opened her lips to speak, but apparently changing her mind, turned and walked haughtily out of the shop and closed the door behind her.

I waited, hoping she would recover herself and return; but, after ten minutes had passed, I thought it better to go away.

As I had told her, I was going to her father's

shop. There I was received very differently. There was a certain softness in the manner of the carpenter which I had not observed before, with the same heartiness in the shake of his hand which had accompanied my last leave-taking. I had purposely allowed ten days to elapse before I called again, to give time for the unpleasant feelings associated with my interference to vanish. And now I had something in my mind about young Tom.

"Have you got anything for your boy yet, Thomas?"

"Not yet, sir. There's time enough. I don't want to part with him just yet. There he is, taking his turn at what's going. Tom!"

And from the farther end of the large shop, where I had not observed him, now approached young Tom, in a canvas jacket, looking quite like a workman.

"Well, Tom, I am glad to find you can turn your hand to anything."

"I must be a stupid, sir, if I couldn't handle my father's tools," returned the lad.

"I don't know that quite. I am not just prepared to admit it, for my own sake. My father is a lawyer, and I never could read a chapter in one of his books—his tools, you know."

"Perhaps you never tried, sir."

"Indeed, I did; and no doubt I could have done it if I had made up my mind to it. But I never felt inclined to finish the page. And that reminds me why I called to-day. Thomas, I know that lad of yours is fond of reading. Can you spare him from his work for an hour or so before breakfast?"

"To-morrow, sir?"

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow," I answered; "and there's Shakespeare for you."

"Of course, sir, whatever you wish," said Thomas, with a perplexed look in which pleasure seemed to long for confirmation, and to be, till that came, afraid to put its "native semblance on."

"I want to give him some direction in his reading. When a man is fond of any tools, and can use them, it is worth while showing him how to use them better."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" exclaimed Tom, his face beaming with delight.

"That *is* kind of you, sir! Tom, you're a made man!" cried the father.

"So," I went on, "if you will let him come to me for an hour every morning, till he gets another place, say from eight to nine, I will see what I can do for him."

Tom's face was as red with delight as his sister's had been with anger. And I left the shop somewhat consoled for the pain I had given Catherine, which grieved me

without making me sorry that I had occasioned it.

I had intended to try to do something from the father's side towards a reconciliation with his daughter. But no sooner had I made my proposal for Tom than I saw I had blocked up my own way towards my more important end. For I could not bear to seem to offer to bribe him even to allow me to do him good. Nor would he see that it was for his good and his daughter's—not at first. The first impression would be that I had a *professional* end to gain; that the reconciling of father and daughter was a sort of parish business of mine, and that I had smoothed the way to it by offering a gift—an intellectual one, true, but not, therefore, the less a gift in the eyes of Thomas, who had a great respect for books. This was just what would irritate such a man, and I resolved to say nothing about it, but bide my time.

When Tom came, I asked him if he had read any of Wordsworth. For I always give people what I like myself, because that must be wherein I can best help them. I was anxious, too, to find out what he was capable of. And for this, anything that has more than a surface meaning will do. I had no doubt about the lad's intellect, and now I wanted to see what there was deeper than the intellect in him.

He said he had not.

I therefore chose one of Wordsworth's sonnets, not one of his best by any means, but suitable for my purpose—the one entitled, "Composed during a Storm." This I gave him to read, telling him to let me know when he considered that he had mastered the meaning of it, and sat down to my own studies. I remember I was then reading the Anglo-Saxon Gospels. I think it was fully half-an-hour before Tom rose and gently approached my

place. I had not been uneasy about the experiment after ten minutes had passed, and after that time was doubled, I felt certain of some measure of success. This may possibly puzzle my reader; but I will explain. It was clear that Tom did not understand the sonnet at first; and I was not in the least certain that he would come to understand it by any exertion of his intellect, without further experience. But what I was delighted to be made sure of was that Tom at least knew that he did not know. For that is the very next step to knowing. Indeed, it may be said to be a more valuable gift than the other, being of general application; for some quick people will understand many things very easily, but when they come to a thing that is beyond their present reach, will fancy they see a meaning in it, or invent one, or even—which is far worse—pronounce it nonsense; and indeed show themselves capable of any device

for getting out of the difficulty, except seeing and confessing to themselves that they are not able to understand it. Possibly this sonnet might be beyond Tom now, but at least there was great hope that he saw, or believed, that there must be something beyond him in it. I only hoped that he would not fall upon some wrong interpretation, seeing he was brooding over it so long.

"Well, Tom," I said, "have you made it out?"

"I can't say I have, sir. I'm afraid I'm very stupid, for I've tried hard. I must just ask you to tell me what it means. But I must tell you one thing, sir: every time I read it over—twenty times, I daresay—I thought I was lying on my mother's grave, as I lay that terrible night; and then at the end there you were standing over me and saying, 'Can I do anything to help you?'"

I was struck with astonishment. For here,

in a wonderful manner, I saw the imagination outrunning the intellect, and manifesting to the heart what the brain could not yet understand. It indicated undeveloped gifts of a far higher nature than those belonging to the mere power of understanding alone. For there was a hidden sympathy of the deepest kind between the life experience of the lad, and the embodiment of such life experience on the part of the poet. But he went on:

"I am sure, sir, I ought to have been at my prayers, then, but I wasn't; so I didn't deserve you to come. But don't you think God is sometimes better to us than we deserve?"

"He is just everything to us, Tom; and we don't and can't deserve anything. Now I will try to explain the sonnet to you."

I had always had an impulse to teach; not for the teaching's sake, for that, regarded as the attempt to fill skulls with knowledge, had

always been to me a desolate dreariness; but the moment I saw a sign of hunger, an indication of readiness to receive, I was invariably seized with a kind of passion for giving. I now proceeded to explain the sonnet. Having done so, nearly as well as I could, Tom said:

"It is very strange, sir; but now that I have heard you say what the poem means, I feel as if I had known it all the time, though I could not say it."

Here at least was no common mind. The reader will not be surprised to hear that the hour before breakfast extended into two hours after breakfast as well. Nor did this take up too much of my time, for the lad was capable of doing a great deal for himself under the sense of help at hand. His father, so far from making any objection to the arrangement, was delighted with it. Nor do I believe that the lad did less work in the shop

for it: I learned that he worked regularly till eight o'clock every night.

Now the good of the arrangement was this: I had the lad fresh in the morning, clear-headed, with no mists from the valley of labour to cloud the heights of understanding. From the exercise of the mind it was a pleasant and relieving change to turn to bodily exertion. I am certain that he both thought and worked better, because he both thought and worked. Every literary man ought to be *mechanical* (to use a Shakespearean word) as well. But it would have been quite a different matter, if he had come to me after the labour of the day. He would not then have been able to think nearly so well. But *labour, sleep, thought, labour again,* seems to me to be the right order with those who, earning their bread by the sweat of the brow, would yet remember that man shall not live by bread alone. Were it possible that our mechanics

could attend the institutions called by their name in the morning instead of the evening, perhaps we should not find them so ready to degenerate into places of mere amusement. I am not objecting to the amusement; only to cease to educate in order to amuse is to degenerate. Amusement is a good and sacred thing; but it is not on a par with education; and, indeed, if it does not in any way further the growth of the higher nature, it cannot be called good at all.

Having exercised him in the analysis of some of the best portions of our home literature,—I mean helped him to take them to pieces, that, putting them together again, he might see what kind of things they were—for who could understand a new machine, or find out what it was meant for, without either actually or in his mind taking it to pieces? (which pieces, however, let me remind my reader, are utterly useless, except in their rela-

tion to the whole)—I resolved to try something fresh with him.

At this point I had intended to give my readers a theory of mine about the teaching and learning of a language; and tell them how I had found the trial of it succeed in the case of Tom Weir. But I think this would be too much of a digression from the course of my narrative, and would, besides, be interesting to those only who had given a good deal of thought to subjects belonging to education. I will only say, therefore, that, by the end of three months, my pupil, without knowing any other Latin author, was able to read any part of the first book of the Æneid—to read it tolerably in measure, and to enjoy the poetry of it—and this not without a knowledge of the declensions and conjugations. As to the syntax, I made the sentences themselves teach him that. Now I know that, as an end, all this was of no great value; but as a begin-

ning, it was invaluable, for it made and *kept* him hungry for more; whereas, in most modes of teaching, the beginnings are such that without the pressure of circumstances, no boy, especially after an interval of cessation, will return to them. Such is not Nature's mode, for the beginnings with her are as pleasant as the fruition, and that without being less thorough than they can be. The knowledge a child gains of the external world is the foundation upon which all his future philosophy is built. Every discovery he makes is fraught with pleasure—that is the secret of his progress, and the essence of my theory: that learning should, in each individual case, as in the first case, be *discovery*—bringing its own pleasure with it. Nor is this to be confounded with turning study into play. It is upon the moon itself that the infant speculates, after the moon itself that he stretches out his eager hands—to find in after years that he still

wants her, but that in science and poetry he has her a thousand-fold more than if she had been handed him down to suck.

So, after all, I have bored my reader with a shadow of my theory, instead of a description. After all, again, the description would have plagued him more, and that must be both his and my comfort.

So through the whole of that summer and the following winter, I went on teaching Tom Weir. He was a lad of uncommon ability, else he could not have effected what I say he had within his first three months of Latin, let my theory be not only perfect in itself, but true as well—true to human nature, I mean. And his father, though his own book-learning was but small, had enough of insight to perceive that his son was something out of the common, and that any possible advantage he might lose by remaining in Marshmallows was considerably more than counter-balanced by

the instruction he got from the vicar. Hence, I believe, it was that not a word was said about another situation for Tom. And I was glad of it; for it seemed to me that the lad had abilities equal to any profession whatever.

CHAPTER IV.

DR DUNCAN'S STORY.

N the next Sunday but one—which was surprising to me when I considered the manner of our last parting—Catherine Weir was in church, for the second time since I had come to the place. As it happened, only as Spenser says—

> "It chanced—eternal God that chance did guide,"

—and why I say this, will appear afterwards—I had, in preaching upon, that is, in endeavouring to enforce the Lord's Prayer by making them think about the meaning of the

words they were so familiar with, come to the petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" with which I naturally connected the words of our Lord that follow: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." I need not tell my reader more of what I said about this, than that I tried to show that even were it possible with God to forgive an unforgiving man, the man himself would not be able to believe for a moment that God did forgive him, and therefore could get no comfort or help or joy of any kind from the forgiveness; so essentially does hatred, or revenge, or contempt, or anything that separates us from man, separate us from God too. To the loving soul alone does the Father reveal Himself; for love alone can understand Him. It is the peace-makers who are His children.

This I said, thinking of no one more than another of my audience. But as I closed my sermon, I could not help fancying that Mrs Oldcastle looked at me with more than her usual fierceness. I forgot all about it, however, for I never seemed to myself to have any hold of, or relation to, that woman. I know I was wrong in being unable to feel my relation to her because I disliked her. But not till years after did I begin to understand how she felt, or recognize in myself a common humanity with her. A sin of my own made me understand her condition. I can hardly explain now; I will tell it when the time comes. When I called upon her next, after the interview last related, she behaved much as if she had forgotten all about it, which was not likely.

In the end of the week after the sermon to which I have alluded, I was passing the Hall gate on my usual Saturday's walk, when Judy

saw me from within, as she came out of the lodge. She was with me in a moment.

"Mr Walton," she said, "how could you preach at grannie as you did last Sunday?"

"I did not preach at anybody, Judy."

"Oh, Mr Walton!"

"You know I didn't, Judy. You know that if I had, I would not say I had not."

"Yes, yes, I know that perfectly," she said, seriously. "But grannie thinks you did."

"How do you know that?"

"By her face."

"That is all, is it?"

"You don't think grannie would say so?"

"No. Nor yet that you could know by her face what she was thinking."

"Oh! can't I just? I can read her face—not so well as plain print; but, let me see, as well as what Uncle Stoddart calls black-letter, at least. I know she thought you were preaching at her; and her face said, 'I shan't forgive

you, anyhow. I never forgive, and I won't for all your preaching.' That 's what her face said."

"I am sure she would not say so, Judy," I said, really not knowing what to say.

"Oh, no; she would not say so. She would say, 'I always forgive, but I never forget.' That 's a favourite saying of hers."

"But, Judy, don't you think it is rather hypocritical of you to say all this to me about your grandmother when she is so kind to you, and you seem such good friends with her?"

She looked up in my face with an expression of surprise.

"It is all *true*, Mr Walton," she said.

"Perhaps. But you are saying it behind her back."

"I will go home and say it to her face directly."

She turned to go.

"No, no, Judy. I did not mean that," I said, taking her by the arm.

"I won't say you told me to do it. I thought there was no harm in telling you. Grannie is kind to me, and I am kind to her. But grannie is afraid of my tongue, and I mean her to be afraid of it. It's the only way to keep her in order. Darling Aunt Winnie! it's all she's got to defend her. If you knew how she treats her sometimes, you would be cross with grannie yourself, Mr Walton, for all your goodness and your white surplice."

And to my yet greater surprise, the wayward girl burst out crying, and, breaking away from me, ran through the gate, and out of sight amongst the trees, without once looking back.

I pursued my walk, my meditations somewhat discomposed by the recurring question: —Would she go home and tell her grand-

mother what she had said to me? And, if she did, would it not widen the breach upon the opposite side of which I seemed to see Ethelwyn stand, out of the reach of my help?

I walked quickly on to reach a stile by means of which I should soon leave the little world of Marshmallows quite behind me, and be alone with nature and my Greek Testament. Hearing the sound of horse-hoofs on the road from Addicehead, I glanced up from my pocket-book, in which I had been looking over the thoughts that had at various moments passed through my mind that week, in order to choose one (or more, if they would go together) to be brooded over to-day for my people's spiritual diet to-morrow—I say I glanced up from my pocket-book, and saw a young man, that is, if I could call myself young still, of distinguished appearance, approaching upon a good serviceable hack. He turned into my road and passed me. He was

pale, with a dark moustache, and large dark eyes; sat his horse well and carelessly; had fine features of the type commonly considered Grecian, but thin, and expressive chiefly of conscious weariness. He wore a white hat with crape upon it, white gloves, and long, military-looking boots. All this I caught as he passed me; and I remember them because, looking after him, I saw him stop at the lodge of the Hall, ring the bell, and then ride through the gate. I confess I did not quite like this; but I got over the feeling so far as to be able to turn to my Testament when I had reached and crossed the stile.

I came home another way, after one of the most delightful days I had ever spent. Having reached the river in the course of my wandering, I came down the side of it towards Old Rogers's cottage, loitering and looking, quiet in heart and soul and mind, because I had committed my cares to Him who careth

for us. The earth was round me—I was rooted, as it were, in it, but the air of a higher life was about me. I was swayed to and fro by the motions of a spiritual power; feelings and desires and hopes passed through me, passed away, and returned; and still my head rose into the truth, and the will of God was the regnant sunlight upon it. I might change my place and condition; new feelings might come forth, and old feelings retire into the lonely corners of my being; but still my heart should be glad and strong in the one changeless thing, in the truth that maketh free; still my head should rise into the sunlight of God, and I should know that because He lived I should live also, and because He was true I should remain true also, nor should any change pass upon me that should make me mourn the decadence of humanity. And then I found that I was gazing over the stump of an old pollard, on which I was leaning, down on a

great bed of white water-lilies, that lay in the broad slow river, here broader and slower than in most places. The slanting yellow sunlight shone through the water down to the very roots anchored in the soil, and the water swathed their stems with coolness and freshness, and a universal sense, I doubted not, of watery presence and nurture. And there on their lovely heads, as they lay on the pillow of the water, shone the life-giving light of the summer sun, filling all the spaces between their outspread petals of living silver with its sea of radiance, and making them gleam with the whiteness which was born of them and the sun. And then came a hand on my shoulder, and, turning, I saw the gray head and the white smock of my old friend Rogers, and I was glad that he loved me enough not to be afraid of the parson and the gentleman.

"I 've found it, sir, I do think," he said, his brown furrowed old face shining with a yet

lovelier light than that which shone from the blossoms of the water-lilies, though, after what I had been thinking about them, it was no wonder that they seemed both to mean the same thing,—both to shine in the light of His countenance.

"Found what, Old Rogers?" I returned, raising myself, and laying my hand in return on his shoulder.

"Why He was displeased with the disciples for not knowing——"

"What He meant about the leaven of the Pharisees," I interrupted. "Yes, yes, of course. Tell me then."

"I will try, sir. It was all dark to me for days. For it appeared to me very nat'ral that, seeing they had no bread in the locker, and hearing tell of leaven which they weren't to eat, they should think it had summat to do with their having none of any sort. But He didn't seem to think it was right of them to

fall into the blunder. For why then? A man can't be always right. He may be like myself, a foremast-man with no schoolin' but what the winds and the waves puts into him, and I 'm thinkin' those fishermen the Lord took to so much were something o' that sort. 'How could they help it?' I said to myself, sir. And from that I came to ask myself, 'Could they have helped it?' If they couldn't, He wouldn't have been vexed with them. Mayhap they ought to ha' been able to help it. And all at once, sir, this mornin', it came to me. I don't know how, but it was give to me, anyhow. And I flung down my rake, and I ran in to the old woman, but she wasn't in the way, and so I went back to my work again. But when I saw you, sir, a readin' upon the lilies o' the field, leastways, the lilies o' the water, I couldn't help runnin' out to tell you. Isn't it a satisfaction, sir, when yer dead reckonin' runs ye right in

betwixt the cheeks of the harbour? I see it all now."

"Well, I want to know, Old Rogers. I 'm not so old as you, and so I *may* live longer; and every time I read that passage, I should like to be able to say to myself, 'Old Rogers gave me this.'"

"I only hope I'm right, sir. It was just this: their heads was full of their dinner because they didn't know where it was to come from. But they ought to ha' known where it always come from. If their hearts had been full of the dinner He give the five thousand hungry men and women and children, they wouldn't have been uncomfortable about not having a loaf. And so they wouldn't have been set upon the wrong tack when He spoke about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees; and they would have known in a moment what He meant. And if I hadn't been too much of the same sort, I wouldn't

have started saying it was but reasonable to be in the doldrums because they were at sea with no biscuit in the locker."

"You 're right; you must be right, Old Rogers. It 's as plain as possible," I cried, rejoiced at the old man's insight. "Thank you. I 'll preach about it to-morrow. I thought I had got my sermon in Foxborough Wood, but I was mistaken: you had got it."

But I was mistaken again. I had not got my sermon yet.

I walked with him to his cottage and left him, after a greeting with the "old woman." Passing then through the village, and seeing by the light of her candle the form of Catherine Weir behind her counter, I went in. I thought Old Rogers's tobacco must be nearly gone, and I might safely buy some more. Catherine's manner was much the same as usual. But as she was weighing my purchase, she broke out all at once:

"It's no use your preaching at me, Mr Walton. I cannot, I *will* not forgive. I will do anything *but* forgive. And it's no use."

"It is not I that say it, Catherine. It is the Lord himself."

I saw no great use in protesting my innocence, yet I thought it better to add—

"And I was not preaching *at* you. I was preaching to you, as much as to any one there, and no more."

Of this she took no notice, and I resumed:

"Just think of what *He* says, not what I say."

"I can't help it. If He won't forgive me, I must go without it. I can't forgive."

I saw that good and evil were fighting in her, and felt that no words of mine could be of further avail at the moment. The words of our Lord had laid hold of her; that was enough for this time. Nor dared I ask her

any questions. I had the feeling that it would hurt, not help. All I could venture to say was:

"I won't trouble you with talk, Catherine. Our Lord wants to talk to you. It is not for me to interfere. But please to remember, if ever you think I can serve you in any way, you have only to send for me."

She murmured a mechanical thanks, and handed me my parcel. I paid for it, bade her good-night, and left the shop.

"O Lord," I said in my heart, as I walked away, "what a labour Thou hast with us all! Shall we ever, some day, be all, and quite, good like Thee? Help me. Fill me with Thy light, that my work may all go to bring about the gladness of Thy kingdom—the holy household of us brothers and sisters—all Thy children."

And now I found that I wanted very much to see my friend Dr Duncan. He received me

with his stately cordiality, and a smile that went farther than all his words of greeting.

"Come now, Mr Walton, I am just going to sit down to my dinner, and you must join me. I think there will be enough for us both. There is, I believe, a chicken a-piece for us, and we can make up with cheese and a glass of —would you believe it?—my own father's port. He was fond of port—the old man—though I never saw him with one glass more aboard than the registered tonnage. He always sat light on the water. Ah, dear me! I 'm old myself now."

"But what am I to do with Mrs Pearson?" I said. There 's some *chef-d'œuvre* of hers waiting for me by this time. She always treats me particularly well on Saturdays and Sundays."

"Ah! then, you must not stop with me. You will fare better at home."

"But I should much prefer stopping with you. Couldn't you send a message for me?"

"To be sure. My boy will run with it at once."

Now, what is the use of writing all this? I do not know. Only that even a *tête-à-tête* dinner with an old friend, now that I am an old man myself, has such a pearly halo about it in the mists of the past, that every little circumstance connected with it becomes interesting, though it may be quite unworthy of record. So, kind reader, let it stand.

We sat down to our dinner, so simple and so well-cooked, that it was just what I liked. I wanted very much to tell my friend what had occurred in Catherine's shop, but I would not begin till we were safe from interruption; and so we chatted away concerning many things, he telling me about his sea-faring life, and I telling him some of the few remarkable things that had happened to me in the course

of my life-voyage. There is no man but has met with some remarkable things that other people would like to know, and which would seem stranger to them than they did at the time to the person to whom they happened.

At length I brought our conversation round to my interview with Catherine Weir.

"Can you understand," I said, "a woman finding it so hard to forgive her own father?"

"Are you sure it is her father?" he returned.

"Surely she has not this feeling towards more than one. That she has it towards her father, I know."

"I don't know," he answered. "I have known resentment preponderate over every other feeling and passion—in the mind of a woman too. I once heard of a good woman who cherished this feeling against a good man because of some distrustful words he had once addressed to herself. She had lived to a great

age, and was expressing to her clergyman her desire that God would take her away; she had been waiting a long time. The clergyman—a very shrewd as well as devout man, and not without a touch of humour, said: 'Perhaps God doesn't mean to let you die till you've forgiven Mr ——.' She was as if struck with a flash of thought, sat silent during the rest of his visit, and when the clergyman called the next day, he found Mr —— and her talking together very quietly over a cup of tea. And she hadn't long to wait after that, I was told, but was gathered to her fathers—or went home to her children, whichever is the better phrase."

"I wish I had had your experience, Dr Duncan," I said.

"I have not had so much experience as a general practitioner, because I have been so long at sea. But I am satisfied that until a medical man knows a good deal more about

his patient than most medical men give themselves the trouble to find out, his prescriptions will partake a good deal more than is necessary of hap-hazard.—As to this question of obstinate resentment, I know one case in which it is the ruling presence of a woman's life—the very light that is in her is resentment. I think her possessed myself."

"Tell me something about her."

"I will. But even to you I will mention no names. Not that I have her confidence in the least. But I think it is better not. I was called to attend a lady at a house where I had never yet been."

"Was it in ——?" I began, but checked myself. Dr Duncan smiled and went on without remark. I could see that he told his story with great care, lest, I thought, he should let anything slip that might give a clue to the place or people.

"I was led up into an old-fashioned, richly-

furnished room. A great wood-fire burned on the hearth. The bed was surrounded with heavy dark curtains, in which the shadowy remains of bright colours were just visible. In the bed lay one of the loveliest young creatures I had ever seen. And, one on each side, stood two of the most dreadful-looking women I had ever beheld. Still as death, while I examined my patient, they stood, with moveless faces, one as white as the other. Only the eyes of both of them were alive. One was evidently mistress, and the other servant. The latter looked more self-contained than the former, but less determined and possibly more cruel. That both could be unkind at least, was plain enough. There was trouble and signs of inward conflict in the eyes of the mistress. The maid gave no sign of any inside to her at all, but stood watching her mistress. A child's toy was lying in a corner of the room."

I may here interrupt my friend's story to tell my reader that I may be mingling some of my own conclusions with what the good man told me of his. For he will see well enough already that I had in a moment attached his description to persons I knew, and, as it turned out, correctly, though I could not be certain about it till the story had advanced a little beyond this early stage of its progress.

"I found the lady very weak and very feverish—a quick feeble pulse, now bounding, and now intermitting—and a restlessness in her eye which I felt contained the secret of her disorder. She kept glancing, as if involuntarily, towards the door, which would not open for all her looking, and I heard her once murmur to herself—for I was still quick of hearing then—'He won't come!' Perhaps I only saw her lips move to those words—I cannot be sure, but I am certain she said them in her heart. I prescribed for her as far as I could

venture, but begged a word with her mother. She went with me into an adjoining room.

"'The lady is longing for something,' I said, not wishing to be so definite as I could have been.

"The mother made no reply. I saw her lips shut yet closer than before.

"'She is your daughter, is she not?'

"'Yes,'—very decidedly.

"'Could you not find out what she wishes?'

"'Perhaps I could guess.'

"'I do not think I can do her any good till she has what she wants.'

"'Is that your mode of prescribing, doctor?' she said, tartly.

"'Yes, certainly,' I answered—'in the present case. Is she married?'

"'Yes.'

"'Has she any children?'

"'One daughter.'

"'Let her see her, then.'

"'She does not care to see her.'

"'Where is her husband?'

"'Excuse me, doctor; I did not send for you to ask questions, but to give advice.'

"'And I came to ask questions, in order that I might give advice.' Do you think a human being is like a clock, that can be taken to pieces, cleaned, and put together again?'

"'My daughter's condition is not a fit subject for jesting.'

"'Certainly not. Send for her husband, or the undertaker, whichever you please,' I said, forgetting my manners and my temper together, for I was more irritable then than I am now, and there was something so repulsive about the woman, that I felt as if I was talking to an evil creature that for her own ends, though what I could not tell, was tormenting the dying lady.

"'I understood you were a *gentleman*—of experience and breeding.'

"'I am not in the question, madam. It is your daughter.'

"'She shall take your prescription.'

"'She must see her husband if it be possible.'

"'It is not possible.'

"'Why?'

"'I say it is not possible, and that is enough. Good morning.'

"I could say no more at that time. I called the next day. She was just the same, only that I knew she wanted to speak to me, and dared not, because of the presence of the two women. Her troubled eyes seemed searching mine for pity and help, and I could not tell what to do for her. There are, indeed, as some one says, strongholds of injustice and wrong into which no law can enter to help.

"One afternoon, about a week after my first visit, I was sitting by her bedside, wondering what could be done to get her out of the

clutches of these tormentors, who were, evidently to me, consuming her in the slow fire of her own affections, when I heard a faint noise, a rapid foot in the house so quiet before; heard doors open and shut, then a dull sound of conflict of some sort. Presently a quick step came up the oak-stair. The face of my patient flushed, and her eyes gleamed as if her soul would come out of them. Weak as she was she sat up in bed, almost without an effort, and the two women darted from the room, one after the other.

"'My husband!' said the girl—for indeed she was little more in age, turning her face, almost distorted with eagerness, towards me.

"'Yes, my dear,' I said, 'I know. But you must be as still as you can, else you will be very ill. Do keep quiet.'

"'I will, I will,' she gasped, stuffing her pocket-handkerchief actually into her mouth to prevent herself from screaming, as if that

was what would hurt her. 'But go to him. They will murder him.'

"That moment I heard a cry, and what sounded like an inarticulate imprecation, but both from a woman's voice; and the next, a young man—as fine a fellow as I ever saw—dressed like a game-keeper, but evidently a gentleman, walked into the room with a quietness that strangely contrasted with the dreadful paleness of his face and with his disordered hair; while the two women followed, as red as he was white, and evidently in fierce wrath from a fruitless struggle with the powerful youth. He walked gently up to his wife, whose outstretched arms and face followed his face as he came round the bed to where she was at the other side, till arms, and face, and head, fell into his embrace.

"I had gone to the mother.

"'Let us have no scene now,' I said, 'or her blood will be on your head.'

"She took no notice of what I said, but stood silently glaring, not gazing, at the pair. I feared an outburst, and had resolved, if it came, to carry her at once from the room, which I was quite able to do then, Mr Walton, though I don't look like it now. But in a moment more the young man, becoming uneasy at the motionlessness of his wife, lifted up her head, and glanced in her face. Seeing the look of terror in his, I hastened to him, and lifting her from him, laid her down—dead. Disease of the heart, I believe. The mother burst into a shriek—not of horror, or grief, or remorse, but of deadly hatred.

"'Look at your work!' she cried to him, as he stood gazing in stupor on the face of the girl. 'You said she was yours, not mine; take her. You may have her now you have killed her.'

"'He may have killed her; but you have *murdered* her, madam,' I said, as I took the

man by the arm, and led him away, yielding like a child. But the moment I got him out of the house, he gave a groan, and, breaking away from me, rushed down a road leading from the back of the house towards the home-farm. I followed, but he had disappeared. I went on; but before I could reach the farm, I heard the gallop of a horse, and saw him tearing away at full speed along the London road. I never heard more of him, or of the story. Some women can be secret enough, I assure you."

I need not follow the rest of our conversation. I could hardly doubt whose was the story I had heard. It threw a light upon several things about which I had been perplexed. What a horror of darkness seemed to hang over that family! What deeds of wickedness! But the reason was clear: the horror came from within; selfishness, and fierceness of temper were its source—no unhappy *doom*.

The worship of one's own will fumes out around the being an atmosphere of evil, an altogether abnormal condition of the moral firmament, out of which will break the very flames of hell. The consciousness of birth and of breeding, instead of stirring up to deeds of gentleness and "high emprise," becomes then but an incentive to violence and cruelty; and things which seem as if they could not happen in a civilized country and a polished age, are proved as possible as ever where the heart is unloving, the feelings unrefined, self the centre, and God nowhere in the man or woman's vision. The terrible things that one reads in old histories, or in modern newspapers, were done by human beings, not by demons.

I did not let my friend know that I knew all that he concealed; but I may as well tell my reader now, what I could not have told him then. I know all the story now, and, as no better place will come, as

far as I can see, I will tell it at once, and briefly.

Dorothy—a wonderful name, *the gift of God*, to be so treated, faring in this, however, like many other of God's gifts—Dorothy Oldcastle was the eldest daughter of Jeremy and Sibyl Oldcastle, and the sister therefore of Ethelwyn. Her father, who was an easy-going man, entirely under the dominion of his wife, died when she was about fifteen, and her mother sent her to school, with especial recommendation to the care of a clergyman in the neighbourhood, whom Mrs Oldcastle knew; for, somehow—and the fact is not so unusual as to justify especial inquiry here—though she paid no attention to what our Lord or His apostles said, nor indeed seemed to care to ask herself if what she did was right, or what she accepted (I cannot say *believed*) was true, she had yet a certain (to me all but incomprehensible) leaning to the clergy. I think it be-

longs to the same kind of superstition which many of our own day are turning to. Offered the Spirit of God for the asking, offered it by the Lord himself, in the misery of their unbelief they betake themselves to necromancy instead, and raise the dead to ask their advice, *and follow it*, and will find some day that Satan had not forgotten how to dress like an angel of light. Nay, he can be more cunning with the demands of the time. We are clever: he will be cleverer. Why should he dress and not speak like an angel of light? Why should he not give good advice if that will help to withdraw people by degrees from regarding the source of all good? He knows well enough that good advice goes for little, but that what fills the heart and mind goes for much. What religion is there in being convinced of a future state? Is that to worship God? It is no more religion than the belief that the sun will rise to-morrow is

religion. It may be a source of happiness to those who could not believe it before, but it is not religion. Where religion comes that will certainly be likewise, but the one is not the other. The devil can afford a kind of conviction of that. It costs him little. But to believe that the spirits of the departed are the mediators between God and us is essential paganism—to call it nothing worse; and a bad enough name too since Christ has come and we have heard and seen the only-begotten of the Father. Thus the instinctive desire for the wonderful, the need we have of a revelation from above us, denied its proper food and nourishment, turns in its hunger to feed upon garbage. As a devout German says—I do not quote him quite correctly—"Where God rules not, demons will." Let us once see with our spiritual eyes the Wonderful, the Counsellor, and surely we shall not turn from Him to seek elsewhere the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Those who sympathize with my feeling in regard to this form of the materialism of our day, will forgive this divergence. I submit to the artistic blame of such as do not, and return to my story.

Dorothy was there three or four years. I said I would be brief. She and the clergyman's son fell in love with each other. The mother heard of it, and sent for her home. She had other views for her. Of course, in such eyes, a daughter's *fancy* was, irrespective of its object altogether, a thing to be sneered at. But she found, to her fierce disdain, that she had not been able to keep all her beloved obstinacy to herself: she had transmitted a portion of it to her daughter. But in her it was combined with noble qualities, and, ceasing to be the evil thing it was in her mother, became an honourable firmness, rendering her able to withstand her mother's stormy importunities. Thus Nature had begun to right

herself—the right in the daughter turning to meet and defy the wrong in the mother, and that in the same strength of character which the mother had misused for evil and selfish ends. And thus the bad breed was broken. She was and would be true to her lover. The consequent *scenes* were dreadful. The spirit but not the will of the girl was all but broken. She felt that she could not sustain the strife long. By some means, unknown to my informant, her lover contrived to communicate with her. He had, through means of relations who had great influence with Government, procured a good appointment in India, whether he must sail within a month. The end was that she left her mother's house. Mr Gladwyn was waiting for her near, and conducted her to his father's, who had constantly refused to aid Mrs Oldcastle by interfering in the matter. They were married next day by the clergyman of a neighbouring parish. But

almost immediately she was taken so ill, that it was impossible for her to accompany her husband, and she was compelled to remain behind at the rectory, hoping to join him the following year.

Before the time arrived, she gave birth to my little friend Judy; and her departure was again delayed by a return of her old complaint, probably the early stages of the disease of which she died. Then, just as she was about to set sail for India, news arrived that Mr Gladwyn had had a sunstroke, and would have leave of absence and come home as soon as he was able to be moved; so that instead of going out to join him, she must wait for him where she was. His mother had been dead for some time. His father, an elderly man of indolent habits, was found dead in his chair one Sunday morning soon after the news had arrived of the illness of his son, to whom he was deeply attached. And so the poor young

creature was left alone with her child, without money, and in weak health. The old man left nothing behind him but his furniture and books. And nothing could be done in arranging his affairs till the arrival of his son, of whom the last accounts had been that he was slowly recovering. In the meantime his wife was in want of money, without a friend to whom she could apply. I presume that one of the few parishioners who visited at the rectory had written to acquaint Mrs Oldcastle with the condition in which her daughter was left, for, influenced by motives of which I dare not take upon me to conjecture an analysis, she wrote, offering her daughter all that she required in her old home. Whether she foreintended her following conduct, or old habit returned with the return of her daughter, I cannot tell; but she had not been more than a few days in the house before she began to tyrannize over her, as in old times, and

although Mrs Gladwyn's health, now always weak, was evidently failing in consequence, she either did not see the cause, or could not restrain her evil impulses. At length the news arrived of Mr Gladwyn's departure for home. Perhaps then for the first time the temptation entered her mind to take her revenge upon him, by making her daughter's illness a pretext for refusing him admission to her presence. She told her she should not see him till she was better, for that it would make her worse; persisted in her resolution after his arrival; and effected, by the help of Sarah, that he should not gain admittance to the house, keeping all the doors locked except one. It was only by the connivance of Ethelwyn, then a girl about fifteen, that he was admitted by the underground way, of which she unlocked the upper door for his entrance. She had then guided him as far as she dared, and directed him the rest of the way to his wife's room.

My reader will now understand how it came about in the process of writing these my recollections, that I have given such a long chapter chiefly to that one evening spent with my good friend, Dr Duncan; for he will see, as I have said, that what he told me opened up a good deal to me.

I had very little time for the privacy of the church that night. Dark as it was, however, I went in before I went home: I had the key of the vestry-door always in my pocket. I groped my way into the pulpit and sat down in the darkness, and thought. Nor did my personal interest in Dr Duncan's story make me forget poor Catherine Weir and the terrible sore in her heart, the sore of unforgivingness. And I saw that of herself she would not, could not, forgive to all eternity; that all the pains of hell could not make her forgive, for that it was a divine glory to forgive, and must come from God. And thinking of

Mrs Oldcastle, I saw that in ourselves we could be sure of no safety, not from the worst and vilest sins; for who could tell how he might not stupify himself by degrees, and by one action after another, each a little worse than the former, till the very fires of Sinai would not flash into eyes blinded with the incense arising to the golden calf of his worship? A man may come to worship a devil without knowing it. Only by being filled with a higher spirit than our own, which, having caused our spirits, is one with our spirits, and is in them the present life principle, are we or can we be safe from this eternal death of our being. This spirit was fighting the evil spirit in Catherine Weir: how was I to urge her to give ear to the good? If will would but side with God, the forces of self, deserted by their leader, must soon quit the field; and the woman—the kingdom within her no longer torn by conflicting forces—would sit quiet at

the feet of the Master, reposing in that rest which He offered to those who could come to Him. Might she not be roused to utter one feeble cry to God for help? That would be one step towards the forgiveness of others. To ask something for herself would be a great advance in such a proud nature as hers. And to ask good heartily is the very next step to giving good heartily.

Many thoughts such as these passed through my mind, chiefly associated with her. For I could not think how to think about Mrs Oldcastle yet. And the old church gloomed about me all the time. And I kept lifting up my heart to the God who had cared to make me, and then drew me to be a preacher to my fellows, and had surely something to give me to say to them; for did He not choose so to work by the foolishness of preaching? Might not my humble ignorance work His will, though my wrath could not work His righteousness?

And I descended from the pulpit thinking with myself, "Let Him do as He will. Here I am. I will say what I see: let Him make it good."

And the next morning, I spoke about the words of our Lord:

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!"

And I looked to see. And there Catherine Weir sat, looking me in the face.

There likewise sat Mrs Oldcastle, looking me in the face too.

And Judy sat there, also looking me in the face, as serious as man could wish grown woman to look.

CHAPTER V.

THE ORGAN.

NE little matter I forgot to mention as having been talked about between Dr Duncan and myself that same evening. I happened to refer to Old Rogers.

"What a fine old fellow that is!" said Dr Duncan.

"Indeed he is," I answered. "He is a great comfort and help to me. I don't think anybody but myself has an idea what there is in that old man."

"The people in the village don't quite like him, though, I find. He is too ready to be down upon them when he sees things going amiss. The fact is, they are afraid of him."

"Something as the Jews were afraid of John the Baptist, because he was an honest man, and spoke not merely his own mind, but the mind of God in it."

"Just so. I believe you 're quite right. Do you know, the other day, happening to go into Weir's shop, to get him to do a job for me, I found him and Old Rogers at close quarters in an argument? I could not well understand the drift of it, not having been present at the beginning, but I soon saw that, keen as Weir was, and far surpassing Rogers in correctness of speech, and precision as well, the old sailor carried too heavy metal for the carpenter. It evidently annoyed Weir; but such was the good humour of Rogers, that he could not, for very shame, lose his temper, the old man's

smile again and again compelling a response on the thin cheeks of the other."

"I know how he would talk exactly," I returned. "He has a kind of loving banter with him, if you will allow me the expression, that is irresistible to any man with a heart in his bosom. I am very glad to hear there is anything like communion begun between them. Weir will get good from him."

"My man-of-all-work is going to leave me. I wonder if the old man would take his place?"

"I do not know whether he is fit for it. But of one thing you may be sure—if Old Rogers does not honestly believe he is fit for it, he will not take it. And he will tell you why, too."

"Of that, however, I think I may be a better judge than he. There is nothing to which a good sailor cannot turn his hand, whatever he may think himself. You see, Mr Walton, it is not like a routine trade. Things are never

twice the same at sea. The sailor has a thousand chances of using his judgment, if he has any to use; and that Old Rogers has in no common degree. So I should have no fear of him. If he won't let me steer him, you must put your hand to the tiller for me."

"I will do what I can," I answered; "for nothing would please me more than to see him in your service. It would be much better for him, and his wife too, than living by uncertain jobs as he does now."

The result of it all was, that Old Rogers consented to try for a month; but when the end of the month came, nothing was said on either side, and the old man remained. And I could see several little new comforts about the cottage, in consequence of the regularity of his wages.

Now I must report another occurrence in regular sequence.

To my surprise, and, I must confess, not a

little to my discomposure, when I rose in the reading-desk on the day after this dinner with Dr Duncan, I saw that the Hall-pew was full. Miss Oldcastle was there for the first time, and, by her side, the gentleman whom the day before I had encountered on horseback. He sat carelessly, easily, contentedly — indifferently; for, although I never that morning looked up from my Prayer-book, except involuntarily in the changes of posture, I could not help seeing that he was always behind the rest of the congregation, as if he had no idea of what was coming next, or did not care to conform. Gladly would I, that day, have shunned the necessity of preaching that was laid upon me. "But," I said to myself, "shall the work given me to do fare ill because of the perturbation of my spirit? No harm is done, though I suffer; but much harm if one tone fails of its force because I suffer." I therefore prayed God to help me; and feeling the right,

because I felt the need, of looking to Him for aid, I cast my care upon Him, kept my thoughts strenuously away from that which discomposed me, and never turned my eyes towards the Hall-pew from the moment I entered the pulpit. And partly, I presume, from the freedom given by the sense of irresponsibility for the result, I being weak and God strong, I preached, I think, a better sermon than I had ever preached before. But when I got into the vestry I found that I could scarcely stand for trembling; and I must have looked ill, for when my attendant came in he got me a glass of wine without even asking me if I would have it, although it was not my custom to take any there. But there was one of my congregation that morning who suffered more than I did from the presence of one of those who filled the Hall-pew.

I recovered in a few moments from my weakness, but, altogether disinclined to face

any of my congregation, went out at my vestry-door, and home through the shrubbery —a path I seldom used, because it had a separatist look about it. When I got to my study, I threw myself on a couch, and fell fast asleep. How often in trouble have I had to thank God for sleep as for one of His best gifts! And how often when I have awaked refreshed and calm, have I thought of poor Sir Philip Sidney, who, dying slowly and patiently in the prime of life and health, was sorely troubled in his mind to know how he had offended God, because, having prayed earnestly for sleep, no sleep came in answer to his cry!

I woke just in time for my afternoon service; and the inward peace in which I found my heart was to myself a marvel and a delight. I felt almost as if I was walking in a blessed dream come from a world of serener air than this of ours. I found, after I was already in the reading-desk, that I was a few minutes

early; and while, with bowed head, I was simply living in the consciousness of the presence of a supreme quiet, the first low notes of the organ broke upon my stillness with the sense of a deeper delight. Never before had I felt, as I felt that afternoon, the triumph of contemplation in Handel's rendering of "I know that my Redeemer liveth." And I felt how through it all ran a cold silvery quiver of sadness, like the light in the east after the sun is gone down, which would have been pain, but for the golden glow of the west, which looks after the light of the world with a patient waiting.—Before the music ceased, it had crossed my mind that I had never before heard that organ utter itself in the language of Handel. But I had no time to think more about it just then, for I rose to read the words of our Lord, "I will arise and go to my Father."

There was no one in the Hall-pew; indeed

it was a rare occurrence if any one was there in the afternoon.

But for all the quietness of my mind during that evening service, I felt ill before I went to bed, and awoke in the morning with a headache, which increased along with other signs of perturbation of the system, until I thought it better to send for Dr Duncan. I have not yet got so imbecile as to suppose that a history of the following six weeks would be interesting to my readers—for during so long did I suffer from low fever ; and more weeks passed during which I was unable to meet my flock. Thanks to the care of Mr Brownrigg, a clever young man in priest's orders, who was living at Addicehead while waiting for a curacy, kindly undertook my duty for me, and thus relieved me from all anxiety about supplying my place.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHURCH-RATE.

BUT I cannot express equal satisfaction in regard to everything that Mr Brownrigg took upon his own responsibility, as my reader will see. He, and another farmer, his neighbour, had been so often re-elected churchwardens, that at last they seemed to have gained a prescriptive right to the office, and the form of election fell into disuse; so much so, that after Mr Summer's death, which took place some year and a half before I became Vicar of Marshmallows, Mr Brownrigg continued to exercise

the duty in his own single person, and nothing had as yet been said about the election of a colleague. So little seemed to fall to the duty of the churchwarden that I regarded the neglect as a trifle, and was remiss in setting it right. I had, therefore, to suffer, as was just. Indeed, Mr Brownrigg was not the man to have power in his hands unchecked.

I had so far recovered that I was able to rise about noon and go into my study, though I was very weak, and had not yet been out, when one morning Mrs Pearson came into the room and said,—

"Please, sir, here 's young Thomas Weir in a great way about something, and insisting upon seeing you, if you possibly can."

I had as yet seen very few of my friends, except the Doctor, and those only for two or three minutes; but although I did not feel very fit for seeing anybody just then, I could not but yield to his desire, confident there

must be a good reason for it, and so told Mrs Pearson to show him in.

"Oh, sir, I know you would be vexed if you hadn't been told," he exclaimed, "and I am sure you will not be angry with me for troubling you."

"What is the matter, Tom?" I said. "I assure you I shall not be angry with you."

"There's Farmer Brownrigg, at this very moment, taking away Mr Templeton's table because he won't pay the church-rate."

"What church-rate?" I cried, starting up from the sofa. "I never heard of a church-rate."

Now before I go farther, it is necessary to explain some things. One day before I was taken ill, I had had a little talk with Mr Brownrigg about some repairs of the church which were necessary, and must be done before another winter. I confess I was rather pleased; for I wanted my people to feel that the church

was their property, and that it was their privilege, if they could regard it as a blessing to have the church, to keep it in decent order and repair. So I said, in a by-the-by way, to my churchwarden, "We must call a vestry before long, and have this looked to." Now my predecessor had left everything of the kind to his churchwardens; and the inhabitants from their side had likewise left the whole affair to the churchwardens. But Mr Brownrigg, who, I must say, had taken more pains than might have been expected of him to make himself acquainted with the legalities of his office, did not fail to call a vestry, to which, as usual, no one had responded; whereupon he imposed a rate according to his own unaided judgment. This, I believe, he did during my illness with the notion of pleasing me by the discovery that the repairs had been already effected according to my mind. Nor did any one of my congregation throw the least difficulty in the churchwar-

den's way.—And now I must refer to another circumstance in the history of my parish.

I think I have already alluded to the fact that there were Dissenters in Marshmallows. There was a little chapel down a lane leading from the main street of the village, in which there was service three times every Sunday. People came to it from many parts of the parish, amongst whom were the families of two or three farmers of substance, while the village and its neighbourhood contributed a portion of the poorest of the inhabitants. A year or two before I came, their minister died, and they had chosen another, a very worthy man, of considerable erudition, but of extreme views, as I heard, upon insignificant points, and moved by a great dislike to national churches and episcopacy. This, I say, is what I had made out about him from what I had heard; and my reader will very probably be inclined to ask, "But why, with principles such as yours,

should you have only hearsay to go upon? Why did you not make the honest man's acquaintance? In such a small place, men should not keep each other at arm's length." And any reader who says so, will say right. All I have to suggest for myself is simply a certain shyness, for which I cannot entirely account, but which was partly made up of fear to intrude, or of being supposed to arrogate to myself the right of making advances, partly of a dread lest we should not be able to get on together, and so the attempt should result in something unpleasantly awkward. I daresay, likewise, that the natural *shelliness* of the English had something to do with it. At all events, I had not made his acquaintance.

Mr Templeton, then, had refused, as a point of conscience, to pay the church-rate when the collector went round to demand it; had been summoned before a magistrate in consequence; had suffered a default; and, proceedings being

pushed from the first in all the pride of Mr Brownrigg's legality, had on this very day been visited by the churchwarden, accompanied by a broker from the neighbouring town of Addicehead, and at the very time when I was hearing of the fact was suffering distraint of his goods. The porcine head of the churchwarden was not on his shoulders by accident, nor without significance.

But I did not wait to understand all this now. It was enough for me that Tom bore witness to the fact that at that moment proceedings were thus driven to extremity. I rang the bell for my boots, and, to the open-mouthed dismay of Mrs Pearson, left the vicarage leaning on Tom's arm. But such was the commotion in my mind, that I had become quite unconscious of illness or even feebleness. Hurrying on in more terror than I can well express lest I should be too late, I reached Mr

Templeton's house just as a small mahogany table was being hoisted into a spring-cart which stood at the door. Breathless with haste, I was yet able to call out,—

"Put that table down directly."

At the same moment Mr Brownrigg appeared from within the door. He approached with the self-satisfied look of a man who has done his duty, and is proud of it. I think he had not heard me.

"You see I 'm prompt, Mr Walton," he said. "But, bless my soul, how ill you look!"

Without answering him—for I was more angry with him than I ought to have been—I repeated,—

"Put that table down, I tell you."

They did so.

"Now," I said, "carry it back into the house."

"Why, sir," interposed Mr Brownrigg, "it 's all right."

"Yes," I said, "as right as the devil would have it."

"I assure you, sir, I have done everything according to law."

"I 'm not so sure of that. I believe I had the right to be chairman at the vestry-meeting; but, instead of even letting me know, you took advantage of my illness to hurry on matters to this shameful and wicked excess."

I did the poor man wrong in this, for I believe he had hurried things really to please me. His face had lengthened considerably by this time, and its rubicund hue declined.

"I did not think you would stand upon ceremony about it, sir. You never seemed to care for business."

"If you talk about legality, so will I. Certainly, *you* don't stand upon ceremony."

"I didn't expect you would turn against your own churchwarden in the execution of his duty, sir," he said, in an offended tone.

"It's bad enough to have a meetin'-house in the place, without one's own parson siding with t'other parson as won't pay a lawful church-rate."

"I would have paid the church-rate for the whole parish ten times over before such a thing should have happened. I feel so disgraced, I am ashamed to look Mr Templeton in the face. Carry that table into the house again, directly."

"It's my property, now," interposed the broker. "I've bought it of the churchwarden, and paid for it."

I turned to Mr Brownrigg.

"How much did he give you for it?" I asked.

"Twenty shillings," returned he, sulkily, "and it won't pay expenses."

"Twenty shillings!" I exclaimed; "for a table that cost three times as much at least!—What do you expect to sell it for?"

"That 's my business," answered the broker.

"I pulled out my purse, and threw a sovereign and a half on the table, saying,—

"*Fifty per cent.* will be, I think, profit enough even on such a transaction."

"I did not offer you the table," returned the broker. "I am not bound to sell except I please, and at my own price."

"Possibly. But I tell you the whole affair is illegal. And if you carry away that table, I shall see what the law will do for me. I assure you I will prosecute you myself. You take up that money, or I will. It will go to pay counsel, I give you my word, if you do not take it to quench strife."

I stretched out my hand. But the broker was before me. Without another word, he pocketed the money, jumped into his cart with his man, and drove off, leaving the churchwarden and the parson standing at the door of the dissenting minister with his mahogany table on the path between them.

"Now, Mr Brownrigg," I said, "lend me a hand to carry this table in again."

He yielded, not graciously,—that could not be expected,—but in silence.

"Oh! sir," interposed young Tom, who had stood by during the dispute, "let me take it. You 're not able to lift it."

"Nonsense! Tom. Keep away," I said. "It is all the reparation I can make."

And so Mr Brownrigg and I blundered into the little parlour with our burden—not a great one, but I began to find myself failing.

Mr Templeton sat in a Windsor chair in the middle of the room. Evidently the table had been carried away from before him, leaving his position uncovered. The floor was strewed with the books which had lain upon it. He sat reading an old folio, as if nothing had happened. But when we entered he rose.

He was a man of middle size, about forty, with short black hair and overhanging bushy

eyebrows. His mouth indicated great firmness, not unmingled with sweetness, and even with humour. He smiled as he rose, but looked embarrassed, glancing first at the table, then at me, and then at Mr Brownrigg, as if begging somebody to tell him what to say. But I did not leave him a moment in this perplexity.

"Mr Templeton," I said, quitting the table, and holding out my hand, "I beg your pardon for myself and my friend here, my churchwarden"—Mr Brownrigg gave a grunt—"that you should have been annoyed like this. I have——"

Mr Templeton interrupted me.

"I assure you it was a matter of conscience with me," he said. "On no other ground——"

"I know it, I know it," I said, interrupting him in my turn. "I beg your pardon; and I have done my best to make amends for it.

Offences must come, you know, Mr Templeton; but I trust I have not incurred the woe that follows upon them by means of whom they come, for I knew nothing of it, and indeed was too ill——"

Here my strength left me altogether, and I sat down. The room began to whirl round me, and I remember nothing more till I knew that I was lying on a couch, with Mrs Templeton bathing my forehead, and Mr Templeton trying to get something into my mouth with a spoon.

Ashamed to find myself in such circumstances, I tried to rise; but Mr Templeton, laying his hand on mine, said—

"My dear sir, add to your kindness this day, by letting my wife and me minister to you."

Now, was not that a courteous speech? He went on—

"Mr Brownrigg has gone for Dr Duncan,

and will be back in a few moments. I beg you will not exert yourself."

I yielded and lay still. Dr Duncan came. His carriage followed, and I was taken home. Before we started, I said to Mr Brownrigg—for I could not rest till I had said it—

"Mr Brownrigg, I spoke in heat when I came up to you, and I am sure I did you wrong. I am certain you had no improper motive in not making me acquainted with your proceedings. You meant no harm to me. But you did very wrong towards Mr Templeton. I will try to show you that when I am well again; but——"

"But you mustn't talk more now," said Dr Duncan.

So I shook hands with Mr Brownrigg, and we parted. I fear, from what I know of my churchwarden, that he went home with the conviction that he had done perfectly right; and that the parson had made an apology

for interfering with a churchwarden who was doing his best to uphold the dignity of Church and State. But perhaps I may be doing him wrong again.

I went home to a week more of bed, and a lengthened process of recovery, during which many were the kind inquiries made after me by my friends, and amongst them by Mr Templeton.

And here I may as well sketch the result of that strange introduction to the dissenting minister.

After I was tolerably well again I received a friendly letter from him one day, expostulating with me on the inconsistency of my remaining within the pale of the *Established Church.* The gist of the letter lay in these words :—

"I confess it perplexes me to understand how to reconcile your Christian and friendly

behaviour to one whom most of your brethren would consider as much beneath their notice as inferior to them in social position, with your remaining the minister of a Church in which such enormities as you employed your private influence to counteract in my case, are not only possible, but certainly lawful, and recognized by most of its members as likewise expedient."

To this I replied :—

"My dear Sir,—I do not like writing letters, especially on subjects of importance. There are a thousand chances of misunderstanding. Whereas, in a personal interview, there is a possibility of controversy being hallowed by communion. Come and dine with me to-morrow, at any hour convenient to you, and make my apologies to Mrs Templeton for not inviting her with you, on the ground that we want to have a long talk with each other

without the distracting influence which even her presence would unavoidably occasion.

"I am, &c. &c."

He accepted my invitation at once. During dinner we talked away, not upon indifferent, but upon the most interesting subjects—connected with the poor, and parish-work, and the influence of the higher upon the lower classes of society. At length we sat down on opposite sides of the fire; and as soon as Mrs Pearson had shut the door, I said,—

"You ask me, Mr Templeton, in your very kind letter——" and here I put my hand in my pocket to find it.

"I asked you," interposed Mr Templeton, "how you could belong to a Church which authorizes things of which you yourself so heartily disapprove."

"And I answer you," I returned, "that just to such a Church our Lord belonged."

"I do not quite understand you."

"Our Lord belonged to the Jewish Church."

"But ours is His Church."

"Yes. But principles remain the same. I speak of Him as belonging to a Church. His conduct would be the same in the same circumstances, whatever Church He belonged to, because He would always do right. I want, if you will allow me, to show you the principle upon which He acted with regard to church-rates."

"Certainly. I beg your pardon for interrupting you."

"The Pharisees demanded a tribute, which, it is allowed, was for the support of the temple and its worship. Our Lord did not refuse to acknowledge their authority, notwithstanding the many ways in which they had degraded the religious observances of the Jewish Church, He acknowledged himself a child of the Church, but said that, as a child, He ought to

have been left to contribute as He pleased to the support of its ordinances, and not to be compelled after such a fashion."

"There I have you," exclaimed Mr Templeton. "He said they were wrong to make the tribute, or church-rate, if it really was such, compulsory."

"I grant it: it is entirely wrong—a very un-Christian proceeding. But our Lord did not therefore desert the Church, as you would have me do. *He paid the money*, lest He should offend. And not having it of His own, He had to ask His Father for it; or, what came to the same thing, make a servant of His Father, namely, a fish in the sea of Galilee, bring Him the money. And there I have *you*, Mr Templeton. It is wrong to compel, and wrong to refuse, the payment of a church-rate. I do not say equally wrong: it is much worse to compel than to refuse."

"You are very generous," returned Mr Tem-

pleton. "May I hope that you will do me the credit to believe that if I saw clearly that they were the same thing, I would not hesitate a moment to follow our Lord's example?"

"I believe it perfectly. Therefore, however we may differ, we are in reality at no strife."

"But is there not this difference, that our Lord was, as you say, a child of the Jewish Church, which was indubitably established by God? Now, if I cannot conscientiously belong to the so-called English Church, why should I have to pay church-rate or tribute?"

"Shall I tell you the argument the English Church might then use? The Church might say, 'Then you are a stranger, and no child; therefore, like the kings of the earth, we *may* take tribute of you.' So you see it would come to this, that Dissenters alone should be *compelled* to pay church-rates."

We both laughed at this pushing of the

argument to illegitimate conclusions. Then I resumed :

"But the real argument is that not for such faults should we separate from each other ; not for such faults, or any faults, so long as it is the repository of the truth, should you separate from the Church."

"I will yield the point when you can show me the same ground for believing the Church of England *the National Church*, appointed such by God, that I can show you and you know already for receiving the Jewish Church as the appointment of God."

"That would involve a long argument, upon which, though I have little doubt upon the matter myself, I cannot say I am prepared to enter at this moment. Meantime, I would just ask you whether you are not sufficiently a child of the Church of England, having received from it a thousand influences for good, if in no other way, yet through your fathers, to find

it no great hardship, and not very unreasonable, to pay a trifle to keep in repair one of the tabernacles in which our forefathers worshipped together, if, as I hope you will allow, in some imperfect measure God is worshipped, and the truth is preached in it?"

"Most willingly would I pay the money. I object simply because the rate is compulsory."

"And therein you have our Lord's example to the contrary."

A silence followed; for I had to deal with an honest man, who was thinking. I resumed:—

"A thousand difficulties will no doubt come up to be considered in the matter. Do not suppose I am anxious to convince you. I believe that our Father, our Elder Brother, and the Spirit that proceedeth from them, is teaching you, as I believe I too am being taught by the same. Why then should I be anxious to

convince you of anything? Will you not in His good time come to see what He would have you see? I am relieved to speak my mind, knowing He would have us speak our minds to each other; but I do not want to proselytize. If you change your mind, you will probably do so on different grounds from any I give you, on grounds which show themselves in the course of your own search after the foundations of truth in regard perhaps to some other question altogether."

Again a silence followed. Then Mr Templeton spoke:—

"Don't think I am satisfied," he said, "because I don't choose to say anything more till I have thought about it. I think you are wrong in your conclusions about the Church, though surely you are right in thinking we ought to have patience with each other. And now tell me true, Mr Walton,—I'm a blunt kind of man, descended from an old Puritan,

one of Cromwell's Ironsides, I believe, and I haven't been to a university like you, but I 'm no fool either, I hope,—don't be offended at my question: wouldn't you be glad to see me out of your parish now?"

I began to speak, but he went on.

"Don't you regard me as an interloper, now —one who has no right to speak because he does not belong to the Church?"

"God forbid!" I answered. "If a word of mine would make you leave my parish to-morrow, I dare not say it. I do not want to incur the rebuke of our Lord—for surely the words 'Forbid him not' involved some rebuke. Would it not be a fearful thing that one soul, because of a deed of mine, should receive a less portion of elevation or comfort in his journey towards his home? Are there not countless modes of saying the truth? You have some of them. I hope I have some. People will hear you who will not hear me.

Preach to them in the name and love of God, Mr Templeton. Speak that you do know and testify that you have seen. You and I will help each other, in proportion as we serve the Master. I only say that in separating from us you are in effect, and by your conduct, saying to us, 'Do not preach, for you follow not with us.' I will not be guilty of the same towards you. Your fathers did the Church no end of good by leaving it. But it is time to unite now."

Once more followed a silence.

"If people could only meet, and look each other in the face," said Mr Templeton at length, "they might find there was not such a gulf between them as they had fancied."

And so we parted.

Now I do not write all this for the sake of the church-rate question. I write it to commemorate the spirit in which Mr Templeton met me. For it is of consequence that two

men who loved their Master should recognize each that the other does so, and thereupon, if not before, should cease to be estranged because of difference of opinion, which surely, inevitable as offence, does not involve the same denunciation of woe.

After this Mr Templeton and I found some opportunities of helping each other. And many a time ere his death we consulted together about things that befell. Once he came to me about a legal difficulty in connexion with the deed of trust of his chapel; and although I could not help him myself, I directed him to such help as was thorough and cost him nothing.

I need not say he never became a churchman, or that I never expected he would. All his memories of a religious childhood, all the sources of the influences which had refined and elevated him, were surrounded with other associations than those of the Church and her

forms. The Church was his grandmother, not his mother, and he had not made any acquaintance with her till comparatively late in life.

But while I do not say that his intellectual objections to the Church were less strong than they had been, I am sure that his feelings were moderated, even changed towards her. And though this may seem of no consequence to one who loves the Church more than the brotherhood, it does not seem of little consequence to me who love the Church because of the brotherhood of which it is the type and the restorer.

It was long before another church-rate was levied in Marshmallows. And when the circumstance did take place, no one dreamed of calling on Mr Templeton for his share in it. But, having heard of it, he called himself upon the churchwarden—Mr Brownrigg still—and offered the money cheerfully. *And*

Mr Brownrigg refused to take it till he had consulted me! I told him to call on Mr Templeton, and say he would be much obliged to him for his contribution, and give him a receipt for it.

CHAPTER VII.

JUDY'S NEWS.

PERHAPS my reader may be sufficiently interested in the person, who, having once begun to tell his story, may possibly have allowed his feelings, in concert with the comfortable confidence afforded by the mask of namelessness, to run away with his pen, and so have babbled of himself more than he ought—may be sufficiently interested, I say, in my mental condition, to cast a speculative thought upon the state of my mind, during my illness, with regard to Miss Oldcastle and the stranger who was

her mother's guest at the Hall. Possibly, being by nature gifted, as I have certainly discovered, with more of hope than is usually mingled with the other elements composing the temperament of humanity, I did not suffer quite so much as some would have suffered during such an illness. But I have reason to fear that when I was light-headed from fever, which was a not uncommon occurrence, especially in the early mornings during the worst of my illness—when Mrs Pearson had to sit up with me, and sometimes an old woman of the village who was generally called in upon such occasions—I may have talked a good deal of nonsense about Miss Oldcastle. For I remember that I was haunted with visions of magnificent conventual ruins which I had discovered, and which, no one seeming to care about them but myself, I was left to wander through at my own lonely will. Would I could see with the

waking eye such a grandeur of Gothic arches and "long-drawn aisles" as then arose upon my sick sense! Within was a labyrinth of passages in the walls, and "long-sounding corridors," and sudden galleries, whence I looked down into the great church aching with silence. Through these I was ever wandering, ever discovering new rooms, new galleries, new marvels of architecture; ever disappointed and ever dissatisfied, because I knew that in one room somewhere in the forgotten mysteries of the pile sat Ethelwyn reading, never lifting those sea-blue eyes of hers from the great volume on her knee, reading every word, slowly turning leaf after leaf; knew that she would sit there reading, till, one by one, every leaf in the huge volume was turned, and she came to the last and read it from top to bottom—down to the *finis* and the urn with a weeping willow over it; when she would close the book with a sigh, lay it

down on the floor, rise and walk slowly away, and leave the glorious ruin dead to me as it had so long been to every one else; knew that if I did not find her before that terrible last page was read, I should never find her at all; but have to go wandering alone all my life through those dreary galleries and corridors, with one hope only left—that I might yet before I died find the "palace-chamber far apart," and see the read and forsaken volume lying on the floor where she had left it, and the chair beside it upon which she had sat so long waiting for some one in vain.

And perhaps to words spoken under these impressions may partly be attributed the fact, which I knew nothing of till long afterwards, that the people of the village began to couple my name with that of Miss Oldcastle.

When all this vanished from me in the returning wave of health that spread through my weary brain, I was yet left anxious and

thoughtful. There was no one from whom I could ask any information about the family at the Hall, so that I was just driven to the best thing—to try to cast my care upon Him who cared for my care. How often do we look upon God as our last and feeblest resource! We go to Him because we have nowhere else to go. And then we learn that the storms of life have driven us, not upon the rocks, but into the desired haven: that we have been compelled, as to the last remaining, so to the best, the only, the central help, the causing cause of all the helps to which we had turned aside as nearer and better.

One day when, having considerably recovered from my second attack, I was sitting reading in my study, who should be announced but my friend Judy!

"Oh, dear Mr Walton, I am so sorry you have been so ill!" exclaimed the impulsive girl, taking my hand in both of hers, and

sitting down beside me. I haven't had a chance of coming to see you before; though we've always managed—I mean auntie and I —to hear about you. I would have come to nurse you, but it was no use thinking of it."

I smiled as I thanked her.

"Ah! you think because I'm such a tom-boy, that I couldn't nurse you. I only wish I had had a chance of letting you see. I am so sorry for you!"

"But I'm nearly well now, Judy, and I have been taken good care of."

"By that frumpy old thing, Mrs Pearson, and——"

"Mrs Pearson is a very kind woman, and an excellent nurse," I said; but she would not heed me.

"And that awful old witch, Mother Goose. She was enough to give you bad dreams all night she sat by you."

"I didn't dream about Mother Goose, as you

call her, Judy, I assure you But now I want to hear how everybody is at the Hall."

"What, grannie, and the white wolf, and all?"

"As many as you please to tell me about."

"Well, grannie is gracious to everybody but auntie."

"Why isn't she gracious to auntie?"

"I don't know. I only guess."

"Is your visitor gone?"

"Yes, long ago. Do you know, I think grannie wants auntie to marry him, and auntie doesn't quite like it? But he's very nice. He's so funny! He'll be back again soon, I daresay. I don't *quite* like him—not so well as you by a whole half, Mr Walton. I wish you would marry auntie; but that would never do. It would drive grannie out of her wits."

To stop the strange girl, and hide some confusion, I said:

"Now tell me about the rest of them."

"Sarah comes next. She's as white and as wolfy as ever. Mr Walton, I hate that woman. She walks like a cat. I am sure she is bad."

"Did you ever think, Judy, what an awful thing it is to be bad? If you did, I think you would be so sorry for her, you could not hate her."

At the same time, knowing what I knew now, and remembering that impressions can date from farther back than the memory can reach, I was not surprised to hear that Judy hated Sarah, though I could not believe that in such a child the hatred was of the most deadly description.

"I am afraid I must go on hating in the meantime," said Judy. "I wish some one would marry auntie, and turn Sarah away. But that couldn't be, so long as grannie lives."

"How is Mr Stoddart?"

"There now! That's one of the things auntie said I was to be sure to tell you."

"Then your aunt knew you were coming to see me?"

"Oh, yes, I told her. Not grannie, you know.—You mustn't let it out."

"I shall be careful. How is Mr Stoddart, then?"

"Not well at all. He was taken ill before you, and has been in bed and by the fireside ever since. Auntie doesn't know what to do with him, he is so out of spirits."

"If to-morrow is fine, I shall go and see him."

"Thank you. I believe that's just what auntie wanted. He won't like it at first, I daresay. But he'll come to, and you'll do him good. You do everybody good you come near."

"I wish that were true, Judy. I fear it is not. What good did I ever do you, Judy?"

"Do me!" she exclaimed, apparently half angry at the question. "Don't you know I

have been an altered character ever since I knew you ?"

And here the odd creature laughed, leaving me in absolute ignorance of how to interpret her. But presently her eyes grew clearer, and I could see the slow film of a tear gathering.

"Mr Walton," she said, "I *have* been trying not to be selfish. You have done me that much good."

"I am very glad, Judy. Don't forget who can do you *all* good. There is One who can not only show you what is right, but can make you able to do and be what is right. You don't know how much you have got to learn yet, Judy ; but there is that one Teacher ever ready to teach if you will only ask Him."

Judy did not answer, but sat looking fixedly at the carpet. She was thinking, though, I saw.

"Who has played the organ, Judy, since your uncle was taken ill ?" I asked, at length.

"Why, auntie, to be sure. Didn't you hear?"

"No," I answered, turning almost sick at the idea of having been away from church for so many Sundays while she was giving voice and expression to the dear asthmatic old pipes. And I did feel very ready to murmur, like a spoilt child that had not had his way. Think of *her* there, and me here!

"Then," I said to myself at last, "it must have been she that played *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, that last time I was in church! And instead of thanking God for that, here I am murmuring that He did not give me more! And this child has just been telling me that I have taught her to try not to be selfish. Certainly I should be ashamed of myself."

"When was your uncle taken ill?"

, I don't exactly remember. But you will come and see him to-morrow? And then we

shall see you too. For we are always out and in of his room just now."

"I will come if Dr Duncan will let me. Perhaps he will take me in his carriage."

"No, no. Don't you come with him. Uncle can't bear doctors. He never was ill in his life before, and he behaves to Dr Duncan just as if he had made him ill. I wish I could send the carriage for you. But I can't, you know."

"Never mind, Judy. I shall manage somehow.—What is the name of the gentleman who was staying with you?"

"Don't you know? Captain George Everard. He would change his name to Oldcastle, you know."

What a foolish pain, like a spear-thrust, they sent through me—those words spoken in such a taken-for-granted way!

"He's a relation—on grannie's side mostly, I believe. But I never could understand the

explanation. What makes it harder is, that all the husbands and wives in our family, for a hundred and fifty years, have been more or less of cousins, or half-cousins, or second or third cousins. Captain Everard has what grandmamma calls a neat little property of his own from his mother, somewhere in Northumberland; for he *is* only a third son, one of a class grannie does not in general feel very friendly to, I assure you, Mr Walton. But his second brother is dead, and the eldest something the worse for the wear, as grannie says; so that the captain comes just within sight of the coronet of an old uncle who ought to have been dead long ago. Just the match for auntie!"

"But you say auntie doesn't like him."

"Oh! but you know that doesn't matter," returned Judy, with bitterness. "What will grannie care for that? It's nothing to anybody but auntie, and she must get

used to it. Nobody makes anything of her."

It was only after she had gone that I thought how astounding it would have been to me to hear a girl of her age show such an acquaintance with worldliness and scheming, had I not been personally so much concerned about one of the objects of her remarks. She certainly was a strange girl. But strange as she was it was a satisfaction to think that the aunt had such a friend and ally in her wild niece. Evidently she had inherited her father's fearlessness; and if only it should turn out that she had likewise inherited her mother's firmness, she might render the best possible service to her aunt against the oppression of her wilful mother.

"How were you able to get here to-day?" I asked, as she rose to go.

"Grannie is in London, and the wolf is with her. Auntie wouldn't leave uncle."

"They have been a good deal in London of late, have they not?"

"Yes. They say it 's about money of auntie's. But I don't understand. *I* think it 's that grannie wants to make the captain marry her; for they sometimes see him when they go to London."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INVALID.

THE following day being very fine, I walked to Oldcastle Hall; but I remember well how much slower I was forced to walk than I was willing. I found to my relief that Mrs Oldcastle had not yet returned. I was shown at once to Mr Stoddart's library. There I found the two ladies in attendance upon him. He was seated by a splendid fire, for the autumn days were now chilly on the shady side, in the most luxurious of easy-chairs, with his furred feet buried in the long hair of the

hearthrug. He looked worn and peevish. All the placidity of his countenance had vanished. The smooth expanse of his forehead was drawn into fifty wrinkles, like a sea over which the fretting wind has been blowing all night. Nor was it only suffering that his face expressed. He looked like a man who strongly suspected that he was ill-used.

After salutation,—

"You are well off, Mr Stoddart," I said, "to have two such nurses."

"They are very kind," sighed the patient.

"You would recommend Mrs Pearson and Mother Goose instead, would you not, Mr Walton?" said Judy, her gray eyes sparkling with fun.

"Judy, be quiet," said the invalid, languidly and yet sharply.

Judy reddened and was silent.

"I am sorry to find you so unwell," I said.

"Yes; I am very ill," he returned.

Aunt and niece rose and left the room quietly.

"Do you suffer much, Mr Stoddart?"

"Much weariness worse than pain. I could welcome death."

"I do not think, from what Dr Duncan says of you, that there is reason to apprehend more than a lingering illness," I said—to try him, I confess.

"I hope not indeed," he exclaimed angrily, sitting up in his chair. "What right has Dr Duncan to talk of me so?"

"To a friend, you know," I returned, apologetically, "who is much interested in your welfare."

"Yes, of course. So is the doctor. A sick man belongs to you both by prescription."

"For my part, I would rather talk about religion to a whole man than a sick man. A sick man is not a *whole* man. He is but part of a man, as it were, for the time,

and it is not so easy to tell what he can take."

"Thank you. I am obliged to you for my new position in the social scale. Of the tailor species, I suppose."

I could not help wishing he were as far up as any man that does such needful honest work.

"My dear sir, I beg your pardon. I meant only a glance at the peculiar relation of the words *whole* and *heal*."

"I do not find etymology interesting at present."

"Not seated in such a library as this?"

"No; I am ill."

Satisfied that, ill as he was, he might be better if he would, I resolved to make another trial.

"Do you remember how Ligarius, in *Julius Cæsar*, discards his sickness?—

> "'I am not sick, if Brutus have in hand
> Any exploit worthy the name of honour.'"

"I want to be well because I don't like to be ill. But what there is in this foggy, swampy world worth being well for, I'm sure I haven't found out yet."

"If you have not, it must be because you have never tried to find out. But I'm not going to attack you when you are not able to defend yourself. We shall find a better time for that. But can't I do something for you? Would you like me to read to you for half an hour?"

"No, thank you. The girls tire me out with reading to me. I hate the very sound of their voices."

"I have got to-day's *Times* in my pocket.'

"I've heard all the news already."

"Then I think I shall only bore you if I stay."

He made me no answer. I rose. He just let me take his hand, and returned my good morning as if there was nothing good in the world, least of all this same morning.

I found the ladies in the outer room. Judy was on her knees on the floor occupied with a long row of books. How the books had got there I wondered; but soon learned the secret which I had in vain asked of the butler on my first visit—namely, how Mr Stoddart reached the volumes arranged immediately under the ceiling, in shelves, as my reader may remember, that looked like beams radiating from the centre. For Judy rose from the floor, and proceeded to put in motion a mechanical arrangement concealed in one of the divisions of the book-shelves along the wall; and I now saw that there were strong cords reaching from the ceiling, and attached to the shelf or rather long box sideways open which contained the books.

"Do take care, Judy," said Ethelwyn. "You know it is very venturous of you to let that shelf down, when uncle is as jealous of his books as a hen of her chickens. I oughtn't to have let you touch the cords."

"You couldn't help it, auntie, dear; for I had the shelf half-way down before you saw me," returned Judy, proceeding to raise the books to their usual position under the ceiling.

But in another moment, either from Judy's awkwardness, or from the gradual decay and final fracture of some cord, down came the whole shelf with a thundering noise, and the books were scattered hither and thither in confusion about the floor. Ethelwyn was gazing in dismay, and Judy had built up her face into a defiant look, when the door of the inner room opened and Mr Stoddart appeared. His brow was already flushed; but when he saw the condition of his idols, (for the lust of the eye had its full share in his regard for his books,) he broke out in a passion to which he could not have given way but for the weak state of his health.

"How *dare* you?" he said, with terrible emphasis on the word *dare*. "Judy, I beg

you will not again show yourself in my apartment till I send for you."

"And then," said Judy, leaving the room, "I am not in the least likely to be otherwise engaged."

"I am very sorry, uncle," began Miss Oldcastle.

But Mr Stoddart had already retreated and banged the door behind him. So Miss Oldcastle and I were left standing together amid the ruins.

She glanced at me with a distressed look. I smiled. She smiled in return.

"I assure you," she said, "uncle is not a bit like himself."

"And I fear in trying to rouse him, I have done him no good,—only made him more irritable," I said. "But he will be sorry when he comes to himself, and so we must take the reversion of his repentance now, and think nothing more of the matter than if he had

already said he was sorry. Besides, when books are in the case, I, for one, must not be too hard upon my unfortunate neighbour."

"Thank you, Mr Walton. I am so much obliged to you for taking my uncle's part. He has been very good to me; and that dear Judy is provoking sometimes. I am afraid I help to spoil her; but you would hardly believe how good she really is, and what a comfort she is to me—with all her waywardness."

"I think I understand Judy," I replied; "and I shall be more mistaken than I am willing to confess I have ever been before, if she does not turn out a very fine woman. The marvel to me is that with all the various influences amongst which she is placed here, she is not really, not seriously, spoiled after all. I assure you I have the greatest regard for, as well as confidence in, my friend Judy."

Ethelwyn—Miss Oldcastle, I should say—gave me such a pleased look that I was well

recompensed—if justice should ever talk of recompense—for my defence of her niece."

"Will you come with me?" she said; "for I fear our talk may continue to annoy Mr Stoddart. His hearing is acute at all times, and has been excessively so since his illness."

"I am at your service," I returned, and followed her from the room.

"Are you still as fond of the old quarry as you used to be, Miss Oldcastle?" I said, as we caught a glimpse of it from the window of a long passage we were going through.

"I think I am. I go there most days. I have not been to-day, though. Would you like to go down?"

"Very much," I said.

"Ah! I forgot, though. You must not go: it is not a fit place for an invalid."

"I cannot call myself an invalid now."

"Your face, I am sorry to say, contradicts your words."

And she looked so kindly at me, that I almost broke out into thanks for the mere look.

"And indeed," she went on, "it is too damp down there, not to speak of the stairs."

By this time we had reached the little room in which I was received the first time I visited the Hall. There we found Judy.

"If you are not too tired already, I should like to show you my little study. It has, I think, a better view than any other room in the house," said Miss Oldcastle.

"I shall be delighted," I replied.

"Come, Judy," said her aunt.

"You don't want me, I am sure, auntie."

"I do, Judy, really. You musn't be cross to us because uncle has been cross to you. Uncle is not well, you know, and isn't a bit like himself; and you know you should not have meddled with his machinery."

And Miss Oldcastle put her arm round Judy,

and kissed her. Whereupon Judy jumped from her seat, threw her book down, and ran to one of the several doors that opened from the room. This disclosed a little staircase, almost like a ladder, only that it wound about, up which we climbed, and reached a charming little room, whose window looked down upon the Bishop's Basin, glimmering slaty through the tops of the trees between. It was panelled in small panels of dark oak, like the room below, but with more of carving. Consequently it was sombre, and its sombreness was unrelieved by any mirror. I gazed about me with a kind of awe. I would gladly have carried away the remembrance of everything and its shadow.—Just opposite the window was a small space of brightness formed by the backs of nicely-bound books. Seeing that these attracted my eye—

"Those are almost all gifts from my uncle," said Miss Oldcastle. "He is really very kind,

and you will not think of him as you have seen him to-day?"

"Indeed I will not," I replied.

My eye fell upon a small pianoforte.

"Do sit down," said Miss Oldcastle.—"You have been very ill, and I could do nothing for you who have been so kind to me."

She spoke as if she had wanted to say this.

"I only wish I had a chance of doing anything for you," I said, as I took a chair in the window. "But if I had done all I ever could hope to do, you have repaid me long ago, I think."

"How? I do not know what you mean, Mr Walton. I have never done you the least service."

"Tell me first, did you play the organ in church that afternoon when—after—before I was taken ill—I mean the same day you had —a friend with you in the pew in the morning?"

I daresay my voice was as irregular as my construction. I ventured just one glance. Her face was flushed. But she answered me at once.

"I did."

"Then I am in your debt more than you know or I can tell you."

"Why, if that is all, I have played the organ every Sunday since uncle was taken ill," she said, smiling.

"I know that now. And I am very glad I did not know it till I was better able to bear the disappointment. But it is only for what I heard that I mean now to acknowledge my obligation. Tell me, Miss Oldcastle,—what is the most precious gift one person can give another?"

She hesitated; and I, fearing to embarrass her, answered for her.

"It must be something imperishable,—something which in its own nature *is*. If instead

of a gem, or even of a flower, we could cast the gift of a lovely thought into the heart of a friend, that would be giving, as the angels, I suppose, must give. But you did more and better for me than that. I had been troubled all the morning; and you made me know that my Redeemer liveth. I did not know you were playing, mind, though I felt a difference. You gave me more trust in God; and what other gift so great could one give? I think that last impression, just as I was taken ill, must have helped me through my illness. Often when I was most oppressed, '*I know that my Redeemer liveth*' would rise up in the troubled air of my mind, and sung by a voice which, though I never heard you sing, I never questioned to be yours."

She turned her face towards me: those sea-blue eyes were full of tears.

"I was troubled myself," she said, with a faltering voice, "when I sang—I mean played

—that. I am so glad it did somebody good! I fear it did not do me much.—I will sing it to you now, if you like."

And she rose to get the music. But that instant Judy, who, I then found, had left the room, bounded into it, with the exclamation,—

"Auntie, auntie! here's grannie!"

Miss Oldcastle turned pale. I confess I felt embarrassed, as if I had been caught in something underhand.

"Is she come in?" asked Miss Oldcastle, trying to speak with indifference.

"She is just at the door,—must be getting out of the fly now. What *shall* we do?"

"What *do* you mean, Judy?" said her aunt.

"Well you know, auntie, as well as I do, that grannie will look as black as a thundercloud to find Mr Walton here; and if she doesn't speak as loud, it will only be because she can't. *I* don't care for myself, but you know on whose head the storm will fall. Do,

dear Mr Walton, come down the back-stair. Then she won't be a bit the wiser. I'll manage it all."

Here was a dilemma for me; either to bring suffering on her, to save whom I would have borne any pain, or to creep out of the house as if I were and ought to be ashamed of myself. I believe that had I been in any other relation to my fellows, I would have resolved at once to lay myself open to the peculiarly unpleasant reproach of sneaking out of the house, rather than that she should innocently suffer for my being innocently there. But I was a clergyman; and I felt, more than I had ever felt before, that therefore I could not risk even the appearance of what was mean. Miss Oldcastle, however, did not leave it to me to settle the matter. All that I have just written had but flashed through my mind when she said:—

"Judy, for shame to propose such a thing to Mr Walton! I am very sorry that he may

chance to have an unpleasant meeting with mamma; but we can't help it. Come, Judy, we will show Mr Walton out together."

"It wasn't for Mr Walton's sake," returned Judy, pouting. "You are very troublesome, auntie dear. Mr Walton, she is so hard to take care of! and she's worse since you came. I shall have to give her up some day. Do be generous, Mr Walton, and take my side—that is, auntie's."

"I am afraid, Judy, I must thank your aunt for taking the part of my duty against my inclination. But this kindness, at least," I said to Miss Oldcastle, "I can never hope to return."

It was a stupid speech, but I could not be annoyed that I had made it.

"All obligations are not burdens to be got rid of, are they?" she replied, with a sweet smile on such a pale troubled face, that I was more moved for her, deliberately handing her

over to the torture for the truth's sake, than I care definitely to confess.

Thereupon, Miss Oldcastle led the way down the stairs, I followed, and Judy brought up the rear. The affair was not so bad as it might have been, inasmuch as, meeting the mistress of the house in no penetralia of the same, I insisted on going out alone, and met Mrs Oldcastle in the hall only. She held out no hand to greet me. I bowed, and said I was sorry to find Mr Stoddart so far from well.

"I fear he is far from well," she returned; "certainly in my opinion too ill to receive visitors."

So saying, she bowed and passed on. I turned and walked out, not ill-pleased, as my readers will believe, with my visit.

From that day I recovered rapidly, and the next Sunday had the pleasure of preaching to my flock; Mr Aikin, the gentleman already mentioned as doing duty for me, reading

prayers. I took for my subject one of our Lord's miracles of healing, I forget which now, and tried to show my people that all healing and all kinds of healing come as certainly and only from His hand as those instances in which He put forth His bodily hand and touched the diseased, and told them to be whole.

And as they left the church the organ played, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God."

I tried hard to prevent my new feelings from so filling my mind as to make me fail of my duty towards my flock. I said to myself, "Let me be the more gentle, the more honourable, the more tender, towards these my brothers and sisters, forasmuch as they are her brothers and sisters too." I wanted to do my work the better that I loved her.

Thus week after week passed, with little that I can remember worthy of record. I

seldom saw Miss Oldcastle, and during this period never alone. True, she played the organ still, for Mr Stoddart continued too unwell to resume his ministry of sound, but I never made any attempt to see her as she came to or went from the organ-loft. I felt that I ought not, or at least that it was better not, lest an interview should trouble my mind, and so interfere with my work, which, if my calling meant anything real, was a consideration of vital import. But one thing I could not help noting—that she seemed, by some intuition, to know the music I liked best; and great help she often gave me by so uplifting my heart upon the billows of the organ-harmony, that my thinking became free and harmonious, and I spoke, as far as my own feeling was concerned, like one upheld on the unseen wings of ministering cherubim. How it might be to those who heard me, or what the value of the utterance in itself might be, I

cannot tell. I only speak of my own feelings, I say.

Does my reader wonder why I did not yet make any further attempt to gain favour in the lady's eyes? He will see, if he will think for a moment. First of all, I could not venture until she had seen more of me; and how to enjoy more of her society while her mother was so unfriendly, both from instinctive dislike to me, and because of the offence I had given her more than once, I did not know; for I feared that to call oftener might only occasion measures upon her part to prevent me from seeing her daughter at all; and I could not tell how far such measures might expedite the event I most dreaded, or add to the discomfort to which Miss Oldcastle was already so much exposed. Meantime I heard nothing of Captain Everard; and the comfort that flowed from such a negative source was yet of a very positive character. At the same

time—will my reader understand me?—I was in some measure deterred from making further advances by the doubt whether her favour for Captain Everard might not be greater than Judy had represented it. For I had always shrunk, I can hardly say with invincible dislike, for I had never tried to conquer it, from rivalry of every kind: it was, somehow, contrary to my nature. Besides, Miss Oldcastle was likely to be rich some day—apparently had money of her own even now; and was it a weakness? was it not a weakness?—I cannot tell—I writhed at the thought of being supposed to marry for money, and being made the object of such remarks as, "Ah! you see! That 's the way with the clergy! They talk about poverty and faith, pretending to despise riches and to trust in God; but just put money in their way, and what chance will a poor girl have beside a rich one! It 's all very well in the pulpit. It 's their business to

talk so. But does one of them believe what he says? or, at least, act upon it?" I think I may be a little excused for the sense of creeping cold that passed over me at the thought of such remarks as these, accompanied by compressed lips and down-drawn corners of the mouth, and reiterated nods of the head of *knowingness*. But I mention this only as a repressing influence, to which I certainly should not have been such a fool as to yield, had I seen the way otherwise clear. For a man by showing how to use money, or rather simply by using money aright, may do more good than by refusing to possess it, if it comes to him in an entirely honourable way, that is, in such a case as mine, merely as an accident of his history. But I was glad to feel pretty sure that if I should be so blessed as to marry Miss Oldcastle—which at the time whereof I now write, seemed far too gorgeous a castle in the clouds ever to descend to the earth for me to enter it—the *poor* of my own

people would be those most likely to understand my position and feelings, and least likely to impute to me worldly motives, as paltry as they are vulgar, and altogether unworthy of a true man.

So the time went on. I called once or twice on Mr Stoddart, and found him, as I thought, better. But he would not allow that he was. Dr Duncan said he was better, and would be better still, if he would only believe it and exert himself.

He continued in the same strangely irritable humour.

CHAPTER IX.

MOOD AND WILL.

WINTER came apace. When we look towards winter from the last borders of autumn, it seems as if we could not encounter it, and as if it never would go over. So does threatened trouble of any kind seem to us as we look forward upon its miry ways from the last borders of the pleasant greensward on which we have hitherto been walking. But not only do both run their course, but each has its own alleviations, its own pleasures; and very marvellously does the healthy mind fit itself to the new circum-

stances; while to those who will bravely take up their burden and bear it, asking no more questions than just, "Is this my burden?" a thousand ministrations of nature and life will come with gentle comfortings. Across a dark verdureless field will blow a wind through the heart of the winter which will wake in the patient mind not a memory merely, but a prophecy of the spring, with a glimmer of crocus, or snowdrop, or primrose; and across the waste of tired endeavour will a gentle hope, coming he knows not whence, breathe springlike upon the heart of the man around whom life looks desolate and dreary. Well do I remember a friend of mine telling me once—he was then a labourer in the field of literature, who had not yet begun to earn his penny a day, though he worked hard—telling me how once, when a hope that had kept him active for months was suddenly quenched—a book refused on which he had spent a passion

of labour—the weight of money that must be paid and could not be had, pressing him down like the coffin-lid that had lately covered the *only* friend to whom he could have applied confidently for aid—telling me, I say, how he stood at the corner of a London street, with the rain dripping black from the brim of his hat, the dreariest of atmospheres about him in the closing afternoon of the City, when the rich men were going home, and the poor men who worked for them were longing to follow; and how across this waste came energy and hope into his bosom, swelling thenceforth with courage to fight, and yield no ear to suggested failure. And the story would not be complete —though it is for the fact of the arrival of unexpected and apparently unfounded *hope* that I tell it—if I did not add, that, in the morning, his wife gave him a letter which their common trouble of yesterday had made her forget, and which had lain with its black

border all night in the darkness unopened, waiting to tell him how the vanished friend had not forgotten him on her death-bed, but had left him enough to take him out of all those difficulties, and give him strength and time to do far better work than the book which had failed of birth.—Some of my readers may doubt whether I am more than "a wandering voice," but whatever I am, or may be thought to be, my friend's story is true.

And all this has come out of the winter that I, in the retrospect of my history, am looking forward to. It came, with its fogs, and dripping boughs, and sodden paths, and rotting leaves, and rains, and skies of weary gray; but also with its fierce red suns, shining aslant upon sheets of manna-like hoarfrost, and delicate ice-films over prisoned waters, and those white falling chaoses of perfect forms—called snow-storms—those confusions confounded of infinite symmetries.

And when the hard frost came, it brought a friend to my door. It was Mr Stoddart.

He entered my room with something of the countenance Naaman must have borne, after his flesh had come again like unto the flesh of a little child. He did not look ashamed, but his pale face looked humble and distressed. Its somewhat self-satisfied placidity had vanished, and instead of the diffused geniality which was its usual expression, it now showed traces of feeling as well as plain signs of suffering. I gave him as warm a welcome as I could, and having seated him comfortably by the fire, and found that he would take no refreshment, began to chat about the day's news, for I had just been reading the newspaper. But he showed no interest beyond what the merest politeness required. I would try something else.

"The cold weather, which makes so many invalids creep into bed, seems to have

brought you out into the air, Mr Stoddart," I said.

"It has revived me, certainly."

"Indeed, one must believe that winter and cold are as beneficent, though not so genial, as summer and its warmth. Winter kills many a disease and many a noxious influence. And what is it to have the fresh green leaves of spring instead of the everlasting brown of some countries which have no winter!"

I talked thus, hoping to rouse him to conversation, and I was successful.

"I feel just as if I were coming out of a winter. Don't you think illness is a kind of human winter?"

"Certainly—more or less stormy. With some a winter of snow and hail and piercing winds; with others of black frosts and creeping fogs, with now and then a glimmer of the sun."

"The last is more like mine. I feel as if I had been in a wet hole in the earth."

"And many a man," I went on, "the foliage of whose character had been turning brown and seared and dry, rattling rather than rustling in the faint hot wind of even fortunes, has come out of the winter of a weary illness with the fresh delicate buds of a new life bursting from the sun-dried bark."

"I wish it would be so with me. I know you mean me. But I don't feel my green leaves coming."

"Facts are not always indicated by feelings."

"Indeed, I hope not; nor yet feelings indicated by facts."

"I do not quite understand you."

"Well, Mr Walton, I will explain myself. I have come to tell you how sorry and ashamed I am that I behaved so badly to you every time you came to see me."

"Oh, nonsense!" I said. "It was your illness, not you."

"At least, my dear sir, the facts of my be-

haviour did not really represent my feelings towards you."

"I know that as well as you do. Don't say another word about it. You had the best excuse for being cross; I should have had none for being offended."

"It was only the outside of me."

"Yes, yes; I acknowledge it heartily."

"But that does not settle the matter between me and myself, Mr Walton; although, by your goodness, it settles it between me and you. It is humiliating to think that illness should so completely 'overcrow' me, that I am no more myself—lose my hold, in fact, of what I call *me*—so that I am almost driven to doubt my personal identity."

"You are fond of theories, Mr Stoddart—perhaps a little too much so."

"Perhaps."

"Will you listen to one of mine?"

"With pleasure."

"It seems to me sometimes—I know it is a partial representation—as if life were a conflict between the inner force of the spirit, which lies in its faith in the unseen—and the outer force of the world, which lies in the pressure of everything it has to show us. The material, operating upon our senses, is always asserting its existence; and if our inner life is not equally vigorous, we shall be moved, urged, what is called actuated, from without, whereas all our activity ought to be from within. But sickness not only overwhelms the mind, but, vitiating all the channels of the senses, causes them to represent things as they are not, of which misrepresentations the presence, persistency, and iteration seduce the man to act from false suggestions instead of from what he knows and believes."

"Well, I understand all that. But what use am I to make of your theory?"

"I am delighted, Mr Stoddart, to hear you

put the question. That is always the point.—The inward holy garrison, that of faith, which holds by the truth, by sacred facts, and not by appearances, must be strengthened and nourished and upheld, and so enabled to resist the onset of the powers without. A friend's remonstrance may appear an unkindness—a friend's jest an unfeelingness—a friend's visit an intrusion; nay, to come to higher things, during a mere headache it will appear as if there was no truth in the world, no reality but that of pain anywhere, and nothing to be desired but deliverance from it. But all such impressions caused from without—for, remember, the body and its innermost experiences are only *outside of the man*—have to be met by the inner confidence of the spirit, resting in God, and resisting every impulse to act according to that which *appears to it* instead of that which *it believes*. Hence, Faith is thus allegorically represented: but I had

better give you Spenser's description of her. —Here is the 'Fairy Queen':—

'She was arrayed all in lily white,
And in her right hand bore a cup of gold,
With wine and water filled up to the height,
In which a serpent did himself enfold,
That horror made to all that did behold;
But she no whit did change her constant mood.'

This serpent stands for the dire perplexity of things about us, at which yet Faith will not blench, acting according to what she believes, and not what shows itself to her by impression and appearance."

"I admit all that you say," returned Mr Stoddart. "But still the practical conclusion —which I understand to be, that the inward garrison must be fortified — is considerably incomplete unless we buttress it with the final *How*. How is it to be fortified? For,

'I have as much of this in art as you,
But yet my nature could not bear it so.'

(You see I read Shakespeare as well as you, Mr

Walton.) I daresay, from a certain inclination to take the opposite side, and a certain dislike to the dogmatism of the clergy—I speak generally—I may have appeared to you indifferent, but I assure you that I have laboured much to withdraw my mind from the influence of money, and ambition, and pleasure, and to turn it to the contemplation of spiritual things. Yet on the first attack of a depressing illness I cease to be a gentleman, I am rude to ladies who do their best and kindest to serve me, and I talk to the friend who comes to cheer and comfort me as if he were an idle vagrant who wanted to sell me a worthless book with the recommendation of the pretence that he wrote it himself. Now that I am in my right mind, I am ashamed of myself, ashamed that it should be possible for me to behave so, and humiliated yet besides that I have no ground of assurance that, should my illness return to-morrow, I should

not behave in the same manner the day after. I want to be *always* in my right mind. When I am not, I know I am not, and yet yield to the appearance of being."

"I understand perfectly what you mean, for I fancy I know a little more of illness than you do. Shall I tell you where I think the fault of your self-training lies?"

"That is just what I want. The things which it pleased me to contemplate when I was well, gave me no pleasure when I was ill. Nothing seemed the same."

"If we were always in a right mood, there would be no room for the exercise of the will. We should go by our mood and inclination only. But that is by the by.—Where you have been wrong is—that you have sought to influence your feelings only by thought and argument with yourself—and not also by contact with your fellows. Besides the ladies of whom you have spoken, I think you have

hardly a friend in this neighbourhood but myself. One friend cannot afford you half experience enough to teach you the relations of life and of human needs. At best, under such circumstances, you can only have right theories: practice for realising them in yourself is nowhere. It is no more possible for a man in the present day to retire from his fellows into the cave of his religion, and thereby leave the world of his own faults and follies behind, than it was possible for the eremites of old to get close to God in virtue of declining the duties which their very birth of human father and mother laid upon them. I do not deny that you and the eremite may both come *nearer* to God, in virtue of whatever is true in your desires and your worship; 'but if a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?'—which surely means to imply at least that to love our neighbour is a great help towards

loving God. How this love is to come about without intercourse, I do not see. And how without this love we are to bear up from within against the thousand irritations to which, especially in sickness, our unavoidable relations with humanity will expose us, I cannot tell either."

"But," returned Mr Stoddart, "I had had a true regard for you, and some friendly communication with you. If human intercourse were what is required in my case, how should I fail just with respect to the only man with whom I had held such intercourse?"

"Because the relations in which you stood with me were those of the individual, not of the race. You like me, because I am fortunate enough to please you—to be a gentleman, I hope—to be a man of some education, and capable of understanding, or at least docile enough to try to understand, what you tell me of your plans and pursuits. But you do

not feel any relation to me on the ground of my humanity—that God made me, and therefore I am your brother. It is not because we grow out of the same stem, but merely because my leaf is a little like your own that you draw to me. Our Lord took on Him the nature of man: you will only regard your individual attractions. Disturb your liking, and your love vanishes."

"You are severe."

"I don't mean really vanishes, but disappears for the time. Yet you will confess you have to wait till, somehow, you know not how, it comes back again—of itself, as it were."

"Yes, I confess. To my sorrow, I find it so."

"Let me tell you the truth, Mr Stoddart. You seem to me to have been hitherto only a dilettante or amateur in spiritual matters. Do not imagine I mean a hypocrite. Very far

from it. The word *amateur* itself suggests a real interest, though it may be of a superficial nature. But in religion one must be *all there.* You seem to me to have taken much interest in unusual forms of theory, and in mystical speculations, to which in themselves I make no objection. But to be content with those, instead of knowing God himself, or to substitute a general amateur friendship towards the race for the love of your neighbour, is a mockery which will always manifest itself to an honest mind like yours in such failure and disappointment in your own character as you are now lamenting, if not, indeed, in some mode far more alarming, because gross and terrible."

"Am I to understand you, then, that intercourse with one's neighbours ought to take the place of meditation?"

"By no means: but ought to go side by side with it, if you would have at once a healthy mind to judge and the means of either verify-

ing your speculations or discovering their falsehood."

"But where am I to find such friends besides yourself with whom to hold spiritual communion?"

"It is the communion of spiritual deeds, deeds of justice, of mercy, of humility—the kind word, the cup of cold water, the visitation in sickness, the lending of money—not spiritual conference or talk, that I mean: the latter will come of itself where it is natural. You would soon find that it is not only to those whose spiritual windows are of the same shape as your own that you are neighbour: there is one poor man in my congregation who knows more—practically, I mean, too—of spirituality of mind than any of us. Perhaps you could not teach him much, but he could teach you. At all events, our neighbours are just those round about us. And the most ignorant man in a little place like Marshmallows, one like

you with leisure ought to know and understand, and have some good influence upon: he is your brother whom you are bound to care for and elevate—I do not mean socially, but really, in himself—if it be possible. You ought at least to get into some simple human relation with him, as you would with the youngest and most ignorant of your brothers and sisters born of the same father and mother; approaching him, not with pompous lecturing or fault-finding, still less with that abomination called condescension, but with the humble service of the elder to the younger, in whatever he may be helped by you without injury to him. Never was there a more injurious mistake than that it is the business of the clergy only to have the care of souls."

"But that would be endless. It would leave me no time for myself."

"Would that be no time for yourself spent in leading a noble, Christian life; in verify-

ing the words of our Lord by doing them; in building your house on the rock of action instead of the sands of theory; in widening your own being by entering into the nature, thoughts, feelings, even fancies, of those around you? In such intercourse you would find health radiating into your own bosom; healing sympathies springing up in the most barren acquaintance; channels opened for the in-rush of truth into your own mind; and opportunities afforded for the exercise of that self-discipline, the lack of which led to the failures which you now bemoan. Soon then would you have cause to wonder how much some of your speculations had fallen into the background, simply because the truth, showing itself grandly true, had so filled and occupied your mind that it left no room for anxiety about such questions as, while secured in the interest all reality gives, were yet dwarfed by the side of it. Nothing, I repeat,

so much as humble ministration to your neighbours, will help you to that perfect love of God which casteth out fear; nothing but the love of God—that God revealed in Christ—will make you able to love your neighbour aright; and the Spirit of God, which alone gives might for any good, will by these loves, which are life, strengthen you at last to believe in the light even in the midst of darkness; to hold the resolution formed in health when sickness has altered the appearance of everything around you; and to feel tenderly towards your fellow, even when you yourself are plunged in dejection or racked with pain.—But," I said, "I fear I have transgressed the bounds of all propriety by enlarging upon this matter as I have done. I can only say I have spoken in proportion to my feeling of its weight and truth."

"I thank you heartily," returned Mr Stoddart, rising. "And I promise you at least to

think over what you have been saying.—I hope to be in my old place in the organ-loft next Sunday."

So he was. And Miss Oldcastle was in the pew with her mother. Nor did she go any more to Addicehead to church.

CHAPTER X.

THE DEVIL IN THOMAS WEIR.

AS the winter went on, it was sad to look on the evident though slow decline of Catherine Weir. It seemed as if the dead season was dragging her to its bosom, to lay her among the leaves of past summers. She was still to be found in the shop, or appeared in it as often as the bell suspended over the door rang to announce the entrance of a customer; but she was terribly worn, and her step indicated much weakness. Nor had the signs of restless trouble diminished as these tide-marks indicated ebbing strength.

There was the same dry fierce fire in her eyes; the same forceful compression of her lips; the same evidences of brooding over some one absorbing thought or feeling. She seemed to me, and to Dr Duncan as well, to be dying of resentment. Would nobody do anything for her? I thought. Would not her father help her? He had got more gentle now; whence I had reason to hope that Christian principles and feelings had begun to rise and operate in him; while surely the influence of his son must, by this time, have done something not only to soften his character generally, but to appease the anger he had cherished towards the one ewe-lamb, against which, having wandered away into the desert place, he had closed and barred the door of the sheep-fold. I would go and see him, and try what could be done for her.

I may be forgiven here if I make the remark that I cannot help thinking that what measure

of success I had already had with my people was partly owing to this, that when I thought of a thing and had concluded it might do, I very seldom put off the consequent action. I found I was wrong sometimes, and that the particular action did no good; but thus movement was kept up in my operative nature, preventing it from sinking towards the inactivity to which I was but too much inclined. Besides, to find out what will not do, is a step towards finding out what will do. Moreover, an attempt in itself unsuccessful may set something or other in motion that will help.

My present attempt turned out one of my failures, though I cannot think that it would have been better left unmade.

A red rayless sun, which one might have imagined sullen and disconsolate because he could not make the dead earth smile into flowers, was looking through the frosty fog of the winter morning as I walked across the

bridge to find Thomas Weir in his workshop. The poplars stood like goblin sentinels, with black heads, upon which the long hair stood on end, all along the dark cold river. Nature looked like a life out of which the love has vanished. I turned from it and hastened on.

Thomas was busy working with a spoke-shave at the spoke of a cart-wheel. How curiously the smallest visual fact will sometimes keep its place in the memory, when it cannot with all earnestness of endeavour recall a thought—a far more important fact! That will come again only when its time comes first.

"A cold morning, Thomas," I called from the door.

"I can always keep myself warm, sir," returned Thomas, cheerfully.

"What are you doing, Tom?" I said, going up to him first.

"A little job for myself, sir. I'm making a few bookshelves."

"I want to have a little talk with your father. Just step out in a minute or so, and let me have half-an-hour."

"Yes, sir, certainly."

I then went to the other end of the shop, for, curiously, as it seemed to me, although father and son were on the best of terms, they always worked as far from each other as the shop would permit, and it was a very large room.

"It is not easy always to keep warm through and through, Thomas," I said.

I suppose my tone revealed to his quick perceptions that "more was meant than met the ear." He looked up from his work, his tool filled with an uncompleted shaving.

"And when the heart gets cold," I went on, "it is not easily warmed again. The fire's hard to light there, Thomas."

Still he looked at me, stooping over his

work, apparently with a presentiment of what was coming.

"I fear there is no way of lighting it again, except the blacksmith's way."

"Hammering the iron till it is red-hot, you mean, sir?"

"I do. When a man's heart has grown cold, the blows of affliction must fall thick and heavy before the fire can be got that will light it.—When did you see your daughter Catherine, Thomas?"

His head dropped, and he began to work as if for bare life. Not a word came from the form now bent over his tool as if he had never lifted himself up since he first began in the morning. I could just see that his face was deadly pale, and his lips compressed like those of one of the violent who take the kingdom of heaven by force. But it was for no such agony of effort that his were thus closed. He went on working till the silence became so lengthened

that it seemed settled into the endless. I felt embarrassed. To break a silence is sometimes as hard as to break a spell. What Thomas would have done or said if he had not had this safety-valve of bodily exertion, I cannot even imagine.

"Thomas," I said, at length, laying my hand on his shoulder, "you are not going to part company with me, I hope?"

"You drive a man too far, sir. I've given in more to you than ever I did to man, sir; and I don't know that I oughtn't to be ashamed of it. But you don't know where to stop. If we lived a thousand years you would be driving a man on to the last. And there's no good in that, sir. A man must be at peace somewhen."

"The question is, Thomas, whether I would be driving you *on* or *back*. You and I too *must* go on or back. I want to go on myself, and to make you go on too. I

don't want to be parted from you now or then."

"That 's all very well, sir, and very kind, I don't doubt; but, as I said afore, a man must be at peace *somewhen*."

"That 's what I want so much that I want you to go on. Peace! I trust in God we shall both have it one day, *somewhen*, as you say. Have you got this peace so plentifully now that you are satisfied as you are? You will never get it but by going on."

"I do not think there is any good got in stirring a puddle. Let by-gones be by-gones. You make a mistake, sir, in rousing an anger which I would willingly let sleep."

"Better a wakeful anger, and a wakeful conscience with it, than an anger sunk into indifference, and a sleeping dog of a conscience that will not bark. To have ceased to be angry is not one step nearer to your daughter. Better strike her, abuse her, with the chance

of a kiss to follow. Ah, Thomas, you are like Jonas with his gourd."

"I don't see what that has to do with it."

"I will tell you. You are fierce in wrath at the disgrace to your family. Your pride is up in arms. You don't care for the misery of your daughter, who, the more wrong she has done, is the more to be pitied by a father's heart. Your pride, I say, is all that you care about. The wrong your daughter has done, you care nothing about; or you would have taken her to your arms years ago, in the hope that the fervour of your love would drive the devil out of her and make her repent. I say it is not the wrong, but the disgrace you care for. The gourd of your pride is withered, and yet you will water it with your daughter's misery."

"Go out of my shop," he cried; "or I may say what I should be sorry for."

I turned at once and left him. I found

young Tom round the corner, leaning against the wall, and reading his Virgil.

"Don't speak to your father, Tom," I said, "for a while. I've put him out of temper. He will be best left alone."

He looked frightened.

"There's no harm done, Tom, my boy. I've been talking to him about your sister. He must have time to think over what I have said to him."

"I see, sir; I see."

"Be as attentive to him as you can."

"I will, sir."

It was not alone resentment at my interference that had thus put the poor fellow beside himself, I was certain: I had called up all the old misery—set the wound bleeding again. Shame was once more wide awake and tearing at his heart. That *his* daughter should have done so! For she had been his pride. She had been the belle of the village, and very

lovely; but having been apprenticed to a dressmaker in Addicehead, had, after being there about a year and a half, returned home, apparently in a decline. After the birth of her child, however, she had, to her own disappointment, and no doubt to that of her father as well, begun to recover. What a time of wretchedness it must have been to both of them until she left his house, one can imagine. Most likely the misery of the father vented itself in greater unkindness than he felt, which, sinking into the proud nature she had derived from him, roused such a resentment as rarely if ever can be thoroughly appeased until Death comes in to help the reconciliation. How often has an old love blazed up again under the blowing of his cold breath, and sent the spirit warm at heart into the regions of the unknown! She never would utter a word to reveal the name or condition of him by whom she had been wronged. To his child, as

long as he drew his life from her, she behaved with strange alternations of dislike and passionate affection; after which season the latter began to diminish in violence, and the former to become more fixed, till at length, by the time I had made their acquaintance, her feelings seemed to have settled into what would have been indifference but for the constant reminder of her shame and her wrong together, which his very presence necessarily was.

They were not only the gossips of the village who judged that the fact of Addicehead's being a garrison town had something to do with the fate that had befallen her; a fate by which, in its very spring-time, when its flowers were loveliest, and hope was strongest for its summer, her life was changed into the dreary wind-swept, rain-sodden moor. The man who can *accept* such a sacrifice from a woman,—I say nothing of *wiling* it from her—is, in his meanness, selfishness, and dishonour, con-

temptible as the Pharisee who, with his long prayers, devours the widow's house. He leaves her desolate, while he walks off free. Would to God a man like the great-hearted, pure-bodied Milton, a man whom young men are compelled to respect, would in this our age, utter such a word as, making "mad the guilty," if such grace might be accorded them, would "appal the free," lest they too should fall into such a mire of selfish dishonour!

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEVIL IN CATHERINE WEIR.

ABOUT this time my father was taken ill, and several journeys to London followed. It is only as vicar that I am writing these memorials—for such they should be called, rather than *annals*, though certainly the use of the latter word has of late become vague enough for all convenience—therefore I have said nothing about my home-relations; but I must just mention here that I had a half-sister, about half my own age, whose anxiety during my father's illness ren-

dered my visits more frequent than perhaps they would have been from my own. But my sister was right in her anxiety. My father grew worse, and in December he died. I will not eulogize one so dear to me. That he was no common man will appear from the fact of his unconventionality and justice in leaving his property to my sister, saying in his will that he had done all I could require of him, in giving me a good education; and that, men having means in their power which women had not, it was unjust to the latter to make them, without a choice, dependent upon the former. After the funeral, my sister, feeling it impossible to remain in the house any longer, begged me to take her with me. So, after arranging affairs, we set out, and reached Marshmallows on New Year's Day.

My sister being so much younger than myself, her presence in my house made very little change in my habits. She came into my

ways without any difficulty, so that I did not experience the least restraint from having to consider her. And I soon began to find her of considerable service among the poor and sick of my flock, the latter class being more numerous this winter, on account of the greater severity of the weather.

I now began to note a change in the habits of Catherine Weir. As far as I remember, I had never up to this time seen her out of her own house, except in church, at which she had been a regular attendant for many weeks. Now, however, I began to meet her when and where I least expected—I do not say often, but so often as to make me believe she went wandering about frequently. It was always at night, however, and always in stormy weather. The marvel was, not that a sick woman could be there—for a sick woman may be able to do anything; but that she could do so more than once—that was the

marvel. At the same time, I began to miss her from church.

Possibly my reader may wonder how I came to have the chance of meeting any one again and again at night and in stormy weather. I can relieve him from the difficulty. Odd as it will appear to some readers, I had naturally a predilection for rough weather. I think I enjoyed fighting with a storm in winter nearly as much as lying on the grass under a beech-tree in summer. Possibly this assertion may seem strange to one likewise who has remarked the ordinary peaceableness of my disposition. But he may have done me the justice to remark at the same time, that I have some considerable pleasure in fighting the devil, though none in fighting my fellow-man, even in the ordinary form of disputation, in which it is not heart's blood, but soul's blood, that is so often shed. Indeed there are many controversies far more immoral, as to the

manner in which they are conducted, than a brutal prize-fight. There is, however, a pleasure of its own in conflict; and I have always experienced a certain indescribable, though I believe not at all unusual exaltation, even in struggling with a well-set, thoroughly roused storm of wind and snow or rain. The sources of this by no means unusual delight, I will not stay to examine, indicating only that I believe the sources are deep.—I was now quite well, and had no reason to fear bad consequences from the indulgence of this surely innocent form of the love of strife.

But I find I must give another reason as well, if I would be thoroughly honest with my reader. The fact was, that as I had recovered strength, I had become more troubled and restless about Miss Oldcastle. I could not see how I was to make any progress towards her favour. There seemed a barrier as insurmountable as intangible between her and me.

The will of one woman came between and parted us, and that will was as the magic line over which no effort of will or strength could enable the enchanted knight to make a single stride. And this consciousness of being fettered by insensible and infrangible bonds, this need of doing something with nothing tangible in the reach of the outstretched hand, so worked upon my mind, that it naturally sought relief, as often as the elemental strife arose, by mingling unconstrained with the tumult of the night.—Will my readers find it hard to believe that this disquietude of mind should gradually sink away as the hours of Saturday glided down into night, and the day of my best labour drew nigh? Or will they answer, "We believe it easily; for then you could at least see the lady, and that comforted you?" Whatever it was that quieted me, not the less have I to thank God for it. All might have been so different. What a fearful thing

would it have been for me to have found my mind so full of my own cares, that I was unable to do God's work and bear my neighbour's burden! But even then I would have cried to Him, and said, "I know Thee that Thou art *not* a hard master."

Now, however, that I have quite accounted, as I believe, by the peculiarity both of my disposition and circumstances, for unusual wanderings under conditions when most people consider themselves fortunate within doors, I must return to Catherine Weir, the eccentricity of whose late behaviour, being in the particulars discussed identical with that of mine, led to the necessity for the explanation of my habits given above.

One January afternoon, just as twilight was folding her gray cloak about her, and vanishing in the night, the wind blowing hard from the south-west, melting the snow under foot, and sorely disturbing the dignity of the one

grand old cedar which stood before my study window, and now filled my room with the great sweeps of its moaning, I felt as if the elements were calling me, and rose to obey the summons. My sister was, by this time, so accustomed to my going out in all weathers, that she troubled me with no expostulation. My spirits began to rise the moment I was in the wind. Keen, and cold, and unsparing, it swept through the leafless branches around me, with a different hiss for every tree that bent, and swayed, and tossed in its torrent. I made my way to the gate and out upon the road, and then, turning to the right, away from the village, I sought a kind of common, open and treeless, the nearest approach to a moor that there was in the county, I believe, over which a wind like this would sweep unstayed by house, or shrub, or fence, the only shelter it afforded lying in the inequalities of its surface.

I had walked with my head bent low against the blast, for the better part of a mile, fighting for every step of the way, when, coming to a deep cut in the common, opening at right angles from the road, whence at some time or other a large quantity of sand had been carted, I turned into its defence to recover my breath, and listen to the noise of the wind in the fierce rush of its sea over the open channel of the common. And I remember I was thinking with myself: "If the air would only become faintly visible for a moment, what a sight it would be of waste grandeur with its thousands of billowing eddies, and self-involved, conflicting, and swallowing whirlpools from the sea-bottom of this common!" when, with my imagination resting on the fancied vision, I was startled by such a moan as seemed about to break into a storm of passionate cries, but was followed by the words:

"O God! I cannot bear it longer. Hast thou *no* help for me?"

Instinctively almost, I knew that Catherine Weir was beside me, though I could not see where she was. In a moment more, however, I thought I could distinguish through the darkness—imagination no doubt filling up the truth of its form—a figure crouching in such an attitude of abandoned despair as recalled one of Flaxman's outlines, the body bent forward over the drawn-up knees, and the face thus hidden even from the darkness. I could not help saying to myself, as I took a step or two towards her, "What is thy trouble to hers!"

I may here remark that I had come to the conclusion, from pondering over her case, that until a yet deeper and bitterer resentment than that which she bore to her father was removed, it would be of no use attacking the latter. For the former kept her in a state of

hostility towards her whole race: with herself at war she had no gentle thoughts, no love for her kind; but ever

"She fed her wound with fresh-renewed bale"

from every hurt that she received from or imagined to be offered her by anything human. So I had resolved that the next time I had an opportunity of speaking to her, I would make an attempt to probe the evil to its root, though I had but little hope, I confess, of doing any good. And now when I heard her say, "Hast thou *no* help for me?" I went near her with the words:

"God has, indeed, help for His own offspring. Has He not suffered that He might help? But you have not yet forgiven."

When I began to speak, she gave a slight start: she was far too miserable to be terrified at anything. Before I had finished, she stood erect on her feet, facing me with the whiteness

of her face glimmering through the blackness of the night.

"I ask Him for peace," she said, "and He sends me more torment."

And I thought of Ahab when he said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

"If we had what we asked for always, we should too often find it was not what we wanted, after all."

"You will not leave me alone," she said. "It is too bad."

Poor woman! It was well for her she could pray to God in her trouble; for she could scarcely endure a word from her fellow-man. She, despairing before God, was fierce as a tigress to her fellow-sinner who would stretch a hand to help her out of the mire, and set her beside him on the rock which he felt firm under his own feet.

"I will not leave you alone, Catherine," I said, feeling that I must at length assume

another tone of speech with her who resisted gentleness. "Scorn my interference as you will," I said, "I have yet to give an account of you. And I have to fear lest my Master should require your blood at my hands. I did not follow you here, you may well believe me; but I have found you here, and I must speak."

All this time the wind was roaring overhead. But in the hollow was stillness, and I was so near her, that I could hear every word she said, although she spoke in a low compressed tone.

"Have you a right to persecute me," she said, "because I am unhappy?"

"I have a right, and, more than a right, I have a duty to aid your better self against your worse. You, I fear, are siding with your worse self."

"You judge me hard. I have had wrongs that ——"

And here she stopped in a way that let me know she *would* say no more.

"That you have had wrongs, and bitter wrongs, I do not for a moment doubt. And him who has done you most wrong, you will not forgive."

"No."

"No. Not even for the sake of Him who, hanging on the tree, after all the bitterness of blows and whipping, and derision, and rudest gestures and taunts, even when the faintness of death was upon Him cried to His Father to forgive their cruelty. He asks you to forgive the man who wronged you, and you will not—not even for Him! Oh, Catherine, Catherine!"

"It is very easy to talk, Mr Walton," she returned with forced but cool scorn.

"Tell me, then," I said, "have *you* nothing to repent of? Have *you* done no wrong in this same miserable matter?"

"I do not understand you, sir," she said, freezingly, petulantly, not sure, perhaps, or unwilling to believe, that I meant what I did mean.

I was fully resolved to be plain with her now.

"Catherine Weir," I said, "did not God give you a house to keep fair and pure for Him. Did you keep it such?"

"He told me lies," she cried fiercely, with a cry that seemed to pierce through the storm over our heads, up towards the everlasting justice. "He lied, and I trusted. For his sake I sinned, and he threw me from him."

"You gave him what was not yours to give. What right had you to cast your pearl before a swine? But dare you say it was *all for his sake* you did it? Was it *all* self-denial? Was there no self-indulgence?"

She made a broken gesture of lifting her hands to her head, let them drop by her side, and said nothing.

"You knew you were doing wrong. You felt it even more than he did. For God made you with a more delicate sense of purity, with a shrinking from the temptation, with a womanly foreboding of disgrace, to help you to hold the cup of your honour steady, which yet you dropped on the ground. Do not seek refuge in the cant about a woman's weakness. The strength of the woman is as needful to her womanhood, as the strength of the man is to his manhood; and a woman is just as strong as she will be. And now, instead of humbling yourself before your Father in heaven, whom you have wronged more even than your father on earth, you rage over your injuries and cherished hatred against him who wronged you. But I will go yet further, and show you, in God's name, that you wronged your seducer. For you were his keeper, as he was yours. What if he had found a noble-hearted girl who also trusted him entirely—just until she

knew she ought not to listen to him a moment longer? who, when his love showed itself less than human, caring but for itself, rose in the royalty of her maidenhood, and looked him in the face? Would he not have been ashamed before her, and so before himself, seeing in the glass of her dignity his own contemptibleness? But instead of such a woman he found you, who let him do as he would. No redemption for him in you. And now he walks the earth the worse for you, defiled by your spoil, glorying in his poor victory over you, despising all women for your sake, unrepentant and proud, ruining others the easier that he has already ruined you."

"He does! he does!" she shrieked; "but I will have my revenge. I can and I will."

And, darting past me, she rushed out into the storm. I followed and could just see that she took the way to the village. Her dim shape went down the wind before me into the

darkness. I followed in the same direction, fast and faster, for the wind was behind me, and a vague fear which ever grew in my heart urged me to overtake her. What had I done? To what might I not have driven her? And although all I had said was true, and I had spoken from motives which, as far as I knew my own heart, I could not condemn, yet, as I sped after her, there came a reaction of feeling from the severity with which I had displayed her own case against her. "Ah! poor sister," I thought, "was it for me thus to reproach thee, who had suffered already so fiercely? If the Spirit speaking in thy heart could not win thee, how should my words of hard accusation, true though they were, every one of them, rouse in thee anything but the wrath that springs from shame? Should I not have tried again, and yet again, to waken thy love? and then a sweet and healing shame, like that of her who bathed the Master's feet with

her tears, would have bred fresh love, and no wrath."

But again I answered for myself, that my heart had not been the less tender towards her that I had tried to humble her, for it was that she might slip from under the net of her pride. Even when my tongue spoke the hardest things I could find, my heart was yearning over her. If I could but make her feel that she too had been wrong, would not the sense of common wrong between them help her to forgive? And with the first motion of willing pardon, would not a spring of tenderness, grief, and hope, burst from her poor old dried-up heart, and make it young and fresh once more? Thus I reasoned with myself as I followed her back through the darkness.

The wind fell a little as we came near the village, and the rain began to come down in torrents. There must have been a moon some-

where behind the clouds, for the darkness became less dense, and I began to fancy I could again see the dim shape which had rushed from me. I increased my speed, and became certain of it. Suddenly, her strength giving way, or her foot stumbling over something in the road, she fell to the earth with a cry.

I was beside her in a moment. She was insensible. I did what I could for her, and in a few minutes she began to come to herself.

"Where am I? Who is it?" she asked, listlessly.

When she found who I was, she made a great effort to rise, and succeeded.

"You must take my arm," I said, "and I will help you to the vicarage."

"I will go home," she answered.

"Lean on me now, at least; for you must get somewhere."

"What does it matter?" she said, in such a tone of despair, that it went to my very heart.

A wild half-cry, half-sob followed, and then she took my arm, and said nothing more. Nor did I trouble her with any words, except, when we reached the gate, to beg her to come into the vicarage instead of going home. But she would not listen to me, and so I took her home.

She pulled the key of the shop from her pocket. Her hand trembled so that I took it from her, and opened the door. A candle with a long snuff was flickering on the counter; and stretched out on the counter, with his head about a foot from the candle, lay little Gerard, fast asleep.

"Ah, little darling!" I said in my heart, "this is not much like painting the sky yet. But who knows?" And as I uttered the commonplace question in my mind, in my mind it was suddenly changed into the half of a great dim prophecy by the answer which arose to it there, for the answer was "God."

I lifted the little fellow in my arms. He had fallen asleep weeping, and his face was dirty, and streaked with the channels of his tears. Catherine had snuffed the candle, and now stood with it in her hand, waiting for me to go. But, without heeding her, I bore my child to the door that led to their dwelling. I had never been up those stairs before, and therefore knew nothing of the way. But without offering any opposition, his mother followed, and lighted me. What a sad face of suffering and strife it was upon which that dim light fell! She set the candle down upon the table of a small room at the top of the stairs, which might have been comfortable enough but that it was neglected and disordered; and now I saw that she did not even have her child to sleep with her, for his crib stood in a corner of this their sitting-room.

I sat down on a haircloth couch, and proceeded to undress little Gerard, trying as much

as I could not to wake him. In this I was almost successful. Catherine stood staring at me without saying a word. She looked dazed, perhaps from the effects of her fall. But she brought me his nightgown notwithstanding. Just as I had finished putting it on, and was rising to lay him in his crib, he opened his eyes, and looked at me; then gave a hurried look round, as if for his mother; then threw his arms about my neck and kissed me. I laid him down and the same moment he was fast asleep. In the morning it would not be even a dream to him.

"Now," I thought, "you are safe for the night, poor fatherless child. Even your mother's hardness will not make you sad now. Perhaps the heavenly Father will send you loving dreams."

I turned to Catherine, and bade her good-night. She just put her hand in mine; but, instead of returning my leave-taking, said :

"Do not fancy you will get the better of me, Mr Walton, by being kind to that boy. I will have my revenge, and I know how. I am only waiting my time. When he is just going to drink, I will dash it from his hand. I will. At the altar I will."

Her eyes were flashing almost with madness, and she made fierce gestures with her arm. I saw that argument was useless.

"You loved him once, Catherine," I said. "Love him again. Love him better. Forgive him. Revenge is far worse than anything you have done yet."

"What do I care? Why should I care?"

And she laughed terribly.

I made haste to leave the room and the house; but I lingered for nearly an hour about the place before I could make up my mind to go home, so much was I afraid lest she should do something altogether insane. But at length I saw the candle appear in the shop, which

was some relief to my anxiety; and reflecting that her one consuming thought of revenge was some security for her conduct otherwise, I went home.

That night my own troubles seemed small to me, and I did not brood over them at all. My mind was filled with the idea of the sad misery which, rather than in which, that poor woman was; and I prayed for her as for a desolate human world whose sun had deserted the heavens, whose fair fields, rivers, and groves were hardening into the frost of death, and all their germs of hope becoming but portions of the lifeless mass. "If I am sorrowful," I said, "God lives none the less. And His will is better than mine, yea, is my hidden and perfected will. In Him is my life, His will be done. What, then, is my trouble compared to hers? I will not sink into it and be selfish."

In the morning my first business was to

inquire after her. I found her in the shop, looking very ill, and obstinately reserved. Gerard sat in a corner, looking as far from happy as a child of his years could look. As I left the shop he crept out with me.

"Gerard, come back," cried his mother.

"I will not take him away," I said.

The boy looked up in my face, as if he wanted to whisper to me, and I stooped to listen.

"I dreamed last night," said the boy, "that a big angel with white wings came and took me out of my bed, and carried me high, high up—so high that I could not dream any more."

"We shall be carried up so high one day, Gerard, my boy, that we shall not want to dream any more. For we shall be carried up to God himself. Now go back to your mother."

He obeyed at once, and I went on through the village.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEVIL IN THE VICAR.

I WANTED just to pass the gate, and look up the road towards Oldcastle Hall. I thought to see nothing but the empty road between the leafless trees, lying there like a dead stream that would not bear me on to the "sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice" that lay beyond. But just as I reached the gate, Miss Oldcastle came out of the lodge, where I learned afterwards the woman that kept the gate was ill.

When she saw me she stopped, and I entered hurriedly, and addressed her. But I could say

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nothing better than the merest commonplaces. For her old manner, which I had almost forgotten, a certain coldness shadowed with haughtiness, whose influence I had strongly felt when I began to make her acquaintance, had returned. I cannot make my reader understand how this could be blended with the sweetness in her face and the gentleness of her manners; but there the opposites were, and I could feel them both. There was likewise a certain drawing of herself away from me, which checked the smallest advance on my part; so that—I wonder at it now, but so it was—after a few words of very ordinary conversation, I bade her good morning and went away, feeling like "a man forbid"—as if I had done her some wrong, and she had chidden me for it. What a stone lay in my breast! I could hardly breathe for it. What could have caused her to change her manner towards me? I had made no advance; I could

not have offended her. Yet there she glided up the road, and here stood I, outside the gate. That road was now a flowing river that bore from me the treasure of the earth, while my boat was spell-bound, and could not follow. I would run after her, fall at her feet, and intreat to know wherein I had offended her. But there I stood enchanted, and there she floated away between the trees; till at length she turned the slow sweep, and I, breathing deep as she vanished from my sight, turned likewise, and walked back the dreary way to the village. And now I knew that I had never been miserable in my life before. And I knew, too, that I had never loved her as I loved her now.

But, as I had for the last ten years of my life been striving to be a right will, with a thousand failures and forgetfulnesses every one of those years, while yet the desire grew stronger as hope recovered from every failure,

I would now try to do my work as if nothing had happened to incapacitate me for it. So I went on to fulfil the plan with which I had left home, including, as it did, a visit to Thomas Weir, whom I had not seen in his own shop since he had ordered me out of it. This, as far as I was concerned, was more accidental than intentional. I had, indeed, abstained from going to him for a while, in order to give him time *to come round;* but then circumstances which I have recorded intervened to prevent me; so that as yet no advance had been made on my part any more than on his towards a reconciliation; which, however, could have been such only on one side, for I had not been in the least offended by the way he had behaved to me, and needed no reconciliation. To tell the truth, I was pleased to find that my words had had force enough with him to rouse his wrath. Anything rather than indifference! That the heart of the

honest man would in the end right me, I could not doubt; in the meantime I would see whether a friendly call might not improve the state of affairs. Till he yielded to the voice within him, however, I could not expect that our relation to each other would be quite restored. As long as he resisted his conscience, and knew that I sided with his conscience, it was impossible he should regard me with peaceful eyes, however much he might desire to be friendly with me.

I found him busy, as usual, for he was one of the most diligent men I have ever known. But his face was gloomy, and I thought or fancied that the old scorn had begun once more to usurp the expression of it. Young Tom was not in the shop.

"It is a long time since I saw you, now, Thomas."

"I can hardly wonder at that," he returned, as if he were trying to do me justice; but his

eyes dropped, and he resumed his work, and said no more. I thought it better to make no reference to the past even by assuring him that it was not from resentment that I had been a stranger.

"How is Tom?" I asked.

"Well enough," he returned. Then, with a smile of peevishness not unmingled with contempt, he added: "He 's getting too uppish for me. I don't think the Latin agrees with him."

I could not help suspecting at once how the matter stood—namely, that the father, unhappy in his conduct to his daughter, and unable to make up his mind to do right with regard to her, had been behaving captiously and unjustly to his son, and so had rendered himself more miserable than ever.

"Perhaps he finds it too much for him without me," I said, evasively; "but I called to-day partly to inform him that I am quite ready now to recommence our readings to-

gether; after which I hope you will find the Latin agree with him better."

"I wish you would let him alone, sir—I mean, take no more trouble about him. You see I can't do as you want me; I wasn't made to go another man's way; and so it's very hard—more than I can bear—to be under so much obligation to you."

"But you mistake me altogether, Thomas. It is for the lad's own sake that I want to go on reading with him. And you won't interfere between him and any use I can be of to him. I assure you, to have you go my way instead of your own is the last thing I could wish, though I confess I do wish very much that you would choose the right way for your own way."

He made me no answer, but maintained a sullen silence.

"Thomas," I said at length, "I had thought you were breaking every bond of Satan that

withheld you from entering into the kingdom of heaven; but I fear he has strengthened his bands and holds you now as much a captive as ever. So it is not even your own way you are walking in, but his."

"It 's no use your trying to frighten me. I don't believe in the devil."

"It is God I want you to believe in. And I am not going to dispute with you now about whether there is a devil or not. In a matter of life and death we have no time for settling every disputed point."

"Life or death! What do you mean?"

"I mean that whether you believe there is a devil or not, you *know* there is an evil power in your mind dragging you down. I am not speaking in generals; I mean *now*, and you know as to what I mean it. And if you yield to it, that evil power, whatever may be your theory about it, will drag you down to death. It is a matter of life

or death, I repeat, not of theory about the devil."

"Well, I always did say, that if you once give a priest an inch he'll take an ell; and I am sorry I forgot it for once."

Having said this, he shut up his mouth in a manner that indicated plainly enough he would not open it again for some time. This, more than his speech, irritated me, and with a mere "good morning," I walked out of the shop.

No sooner was I in the open air than I knew that I too, I as well as poor Thomas Weir, was under a spell; knew that I had gone to him before I had recovered sufficiently from the mingled disappointment and mortification of my interview with Miss Oldcastle; that while I spoke to him I was not speaking with a whole heart; that I had been discharging a duty as if I had been discharging a musket; that, although I had spoken the truth, I had spoken it ungraciously and selfishly.

I could not bear it. I turned instantly and went back into the shop.

"Thomas, my friend," I said, holding out my hand, "I beg your pardon. I was wrong. I spoke to you as I ought not. I was troubled in my own mind, and that made me lose my temper and be rude to you, who are far more troubled than I am. Forgive me!"

He did not take my hand at first, but stared at me as if, not comprehending me, he supposed that I was backing up what I had said last with more of the same sort. But by the time I had finished he saw what I meant; his countenance altered and looked as if the evil spirit were about to depart from him; he held out his hand, gave mine a great grasp, dropped his head, went on with his work, and said never a word.

I went out of the shop once more, but in a greatly altered mood.

On the way home, I tried to find out how

it was that I had that morning failed so signally. I had little virtue in keeping my temper, because it was naturally very even; therefore I had the more shame in losing it. I had borne all my uneasiness about Miss Oldcastle without, as far as I knew, transgressing in this fashion till this very morning. Were great sorrows less hurtful to the temper than small disappointments? Yes, surely. But Shakespeare represents *Brutus*, after hearing of the sudden death of his wife, as losing his temper with *Cassius* to a degree that bewildered the latter, who said he did not know that *Brutus* could have been so angry. Is this consistent with the character of the stately-minded *Brutus*, or with the dignity of sorrow? It is. For the loss of his wife alone would have made him only less irritable; but the whole weight of an army, with its distracting cares and conflicting interests, pressed upon him; and the battle of an empire was to be

fought at daybreak, so that he could not be alone with his grief. Between the silence of death in his mind, and the roar of life in his brain, he became irritable.

Looking yet deeper into it, I found that till this morning I had experienced no personal mortification with respect to Miss Oldcastle. It was not the mere disappointment of having no more talk with her, for the sight of her was a blessing I had not in the least expected, that had worked upon me, but the fact that she had repelled or seemed to repel me. And thus I found that self was at the root of the wrong I had done to one over whose mental condition, especially while I was telling him the unwelcome truth, I ought to have been as tender as a mother over her wounded child. I could not say that it was wrong to feel disappointed or even mortified; but something was wrong when one whose especial business it was to serve his people in the name of Him

who was full of grace and truth, made them suffer because of his own inward pain.

No sooner had I settled this in my mind than my trouble returned with a sudden pang. Had I actually seen her that morning, and spoken to her, and left her with a pain in my heart? What if that face of hers was doomed ever to bring with it such a pain—to be ever to me no more than a lovely vision radiating grief? If so, I would endure in silence and as patiently as I could, trying to make up for the lack of brightness in my own fate by causing more brightness in the fate of others. I would at least keep on trying to do my work.

That moment I felt a little hand poke itself into mine. I looked down, and there was Gerard Weir looking up in my face. I found myself in the midst of the children coming out of school, for it was Saturday, and a half-holiday. He smiled in my face, and I hope I smiled in his; and so, hand in hand, we went

on to the vicarage, where I gave him up to my sister. But I cannot convey to my reader any notion of the quietness that entered my heart with the grasp of that childish hand. I think it was the faith of the boy in me that comforted me, but I could not help thinking of the words of our Lord about receiving a child in His name, and so receiving Him. By the time we reached the vicarage my heart was very quiet. As the little child held by my hand, so I seemed to be holding by God's hand. And a sense of heart-security, as well as soul-safety, awoke in me; and I said to myself,—Surely He will take care of my heart as well as of my mind and my conscience. For one blessed moment I seemed to be at the very centre of things, looking out quietly upon my own troubled emotions as upon something outside of me—apart from me, even as one from the firm rock may look abroad upon the vexed sea. And I thought I then knew some-

thing of what the apostle meant when he said, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." I knew that there was a deeper self than that which was thus troubled.

I had not had my usual ramble this morning, and was otherwise ill prepared for the Sunday. So I went early into the church; but finding that the sexton's wife had not yet finished lighting the stove, I sat down by my own fire in the vestry.

Suppose I am sitting there now while I say one word for our congregations in winter. I was very particular in having the church well warmed before Sunday. I think some parsons must neglect seeing after this matter on principle, because warmth may make a weary creature go to sleep here and there about the place: as if any healing doctrine could enter the soul while it is on the rack of the frost. The clergy should see—for it is their business—that their people have no occasion to think

of their bodies at all while they are in church. They have enough ado to think of the truth. When our Lord was feeding even their bodies, He made them all sit down on the grass. It is worth noticing that there was much grass in the place—a rare thing I should think in those countries—and therefore, perhaps, it was chosen by Him for their comfort in feeding their souls and bodies both. If I may judge from experiences of my own, one of the reasons why some churches are of all places the least likely for anything good to be found in, is, that they are as wretchedly cold to the body as they are to the soul—too cold every way for anything to grow in them. *Edelweiss*, "Noble-white"—as they call a plant growing under the snow on some of the Alps—could not survive the winter in such churches. There is small welcome in a cold house. And the clergyman, who is the steward, should look to it. It is for him to give his Master's friends a

welcome to his Master's house—for the welcome of a servant is precious, and now-a-days very rare.

And now Mrs Stone must have finished. I go into the old church which looks as if it were quietly waiting for its people. No. She has not done yet. Never mind.—How full of meaning the vaulted roof looks! as if, having gathered a soul of its own out of the generations that have worshipped here for so long, it had feeling enough to grow hungry for a psalm before the end of the week.

Some such half-foolish fancy was now passing through my tranquillized mind or rather heart—for the mind would have rejected it at once—when to my—what shall I call it?—not amazement, for the delight was too strong for amazement—the old organ woke up and began to think aloud. As if it had been brooding over it all the week in the wonderful convolutions of its wooden brain, it began to

sigh out the *Agnus Dei* of Mozart's twelfth mass upon the air of the still church, which lay swept and garnished for the Sunday.—How could it be? I know now; and I guessed then; and my guess was right; and my reader must be content to guess too. I took no step to verify my conjecture, for I felt that I was upon my honour, but sat in one of the pews and listened, till the old organ sobbed itself into silence. Then I heard the steps of the sexton's wife vanish from the church, heard her lock the door, and knew that I was alone in the ancient pile, with the twilight growing thick about me, and felt like Sir Galahad, when, after the "rolling organ-harmony," he heard "wings flutter, voices hover clear." In a moment the mood changed; and I was sorry, not that the dear organ was dead for the night, but actually felt gently mournful that the wonderful old thing never had and never could have a conscious

life of its own. So strangely does the passion —which I had not invented, reader, whoever thou art that thinkest love and a church do not well harmonize—so strangely, I say, full to overflowing of its own vitality, does it radiate life, that it would even of its own superabundance quicken into blessed consciousness the inanimate objects around it, thinking what they would feel had they a consciousness correspondent to their form, were their faculties moved from within themselves instead of from the will and operation of humanity.

I lingered on long in the dark church, as my reader knows I had done often before. Nor did I move from the seat I had first taken till I left the sacred building. And there I made my sermon for the next morning. And herewith I impart it to my reader. But he need not be afraid of another such as I have already given him, for I impart it only

in its original germ, its concentrated essence of sermon—these four verses:

Had I the grace to win the grace
Of some old man complete in lore,
My face would worship at his face,
Like childhood seated on the floor.

Had I the grace to win the grace
Of childhood, loving shy, apart,
The child should find a nearer place,
And teach me resting on my heart.

Had I the grace to win the grace
Of maiden living all above,
My soul would trample down the base,
That she might have a man to love.

A grace I have no grace to win
Knocks now at my half-open door:
Ah, Lord of glory, come thou in,
Thy grace divine is all and more.

This was what I made for myself. I told my people that God had created all our worships, reverences, tendernesses, loves. That they had come out of His heart, and He had made them in us because they were in Him first. That otherwise He would not have cared to make them. That all that we could